







THE DRUMS OF WAR



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# THE DRUMS OF WAR

BY HENRY DE VERE STACPOOLE

AUTHOR OF "THE BLUE LAGOON," ETC.

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TO MY WIFE



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## PART I



## CHAPTER I

### THE ROAD TO FRANKFORT

WE had been travelling since morning, three of us—my father, General Count Mahon, myself, and Joubert—to say nothing of Marengo the boarhound which followed our carriage. The great old family travelling-carriage, packed with luggage, wine, and cigars, and drawn by two stout horses, had been making the dust of Germany fly over the hedgeless German fields since dawn. It was noon now, and hot. I remember still the exact feel and smell of the blazing blue cushions as I pressed my childish cheek against them and felt how hot they were, and the unfailing pleasure and wonder with which the apple- and plum-trees bordering the road filled my soul. Apple-trees and plum-trees bordering the road, laden with fruit and unprotected, the snub-nosed German children we passed on the wayside seemed to my mind happier than the inhabitants of Golconda, living in a country like that.

It was the first of September, 1860. I was only nine then, but I did not complain of the heat or the dust, or the cramp that inhabited,

like a crab, the old-time travelling-carriage, seizing you now in the back, now in the leg, now in the spirit. For one thing, I was to be a soldier, like my father, and wear white moustaches and smoke cigars, and carry a sword; for another thing, we had been travelling a month, and I was inured to the business; and, for another thing, I was a Mahon.

The man beside me, buttoned in a blue frock-coat, adorned with the ribbon of the Legion of Honour, stout, rubicund of face, opulent, and magnificent-looking, was, with the exception of my small self, the last representative of the Mahons of Tullaghmore.

Napoleon had drawn the Mahons from Ireland to France just as a magnet attracts steel-filings. My grandfather had seen the burning of Moscow, and had ridden in the charge of Millhaud's cuirassiers on that fatal Sunday men call Waterloo Day; and my father, the man beside me in the blue frock-coat, had adorned the French Army with the help of his splendid personality, his sword, and a few francs a day, till his marriage with Marie Marquise de Saluce, a woman of marvellous beauty, great wealth, and the inheritor of the Château de Saluce, which is near Etiolles, but a few miles from Paris.

It was a love-match pure and simple—one of those fairyland marriages arranged by love—and she died when I was born.

My father would have shot himself only for Joubert—Joubert, corporal in the 121st of the Line, a personage with an angry, withered, sun-

burnt face, eyes and moustache like the eyes and moustache of a wrathful cat, the heart of a child, and the figure and perfume of a ramrod.

The sense of smell plays a large part in the lives of children, and conjures up visions with a tremendous potency, lost as the child deteriorates into a man.

Joubert smelt of gunpowder. Probably it was only the Caporal which he smoked, but to my mind it was the true smell of the Grand Army.

Sitting on Joubert's knee and listening to tales of battle, and sniffing him at the same time, I could see the Mamelukes charging, backgrounded by the Pyramids; I could hear the thunder of Marengo, the roar of the cannons, and the drums of war leading the Grand Army over the highways of Europe;—echoes from the time before I was born.

What a splendid nurse for a child an old soldier makes if he is of the right sort! Joubert was my nurse and my picture-book.

A drummer of fifteen, he had beaten the charge for the "Growlers" at Waterloo, when the 121st of the Line, shoal upon shoal of bayonets, had stormed Mont St. Jean. He had received a bullet in the shoulder during that same charge; he had killed an Englishman; but all that seemed little compared with the fact that—HE HAD SEEN NAPOLEON!

Joubert was driving us.

We were bound for the Schloss Lichtenberg, not far from Homburg, on a visit to Baron Carl Lichtenberg, a relation of my mother. Of course

we could have travelled by more rapid means of transport, but it suited the humour of my father to travel just as he did in his own carriage, driven by his own man, with all his luggage about him, after the fashion of a nobleman of the year 1810.

We had stopped at Carlsruhe, we had stopped at Mayence, we had stopped here and there. How that journey lies like a living and lovely picture in my mind! Time has blown away the dust. I do not feel the fatigue now. The vast blue sky of a Continental summer, the poplar-trees, the storks' nests, the old-time inns, Carlsruhe and its military bands, Mayence and its drums and marching soldiers, the vivid blue of the Rhine, and the courtyards and pleasaunces of the lordly houses we stopped at, lie before me, a picture made poetical by distance, a picture which stands as the beginning of my life and the beginning of this story of war and love.

Joubert was driving us.

"Joubert," cried my father, "we are near Frankfort now. Remember, the Hôtel des Hollandais."

Joubert, who had been speechless for miles, flung up his elbows just as a duck flings up her wings; he gave the horses a cut with the whip, and then he burst out:

"Frankfort. Ah, yes! Frankfort. Do you think I can't smell it? I can smell a German town a league away, just as I can see a German woman a league away, by the size of her feet. Ah, mon Dieu! Come up, Cæsare; come up, Polastron. My God! Frankfort!"

At a hotel, before strangers, in any public place, it was always "Oui, mon Général," "Oui, monsieur"; but alone, with no one to listen, Joubert talked to the General just as the General talked to Joubert. An extraordinary and solid friendship cemented the relationship of master and man ever since that terrible day in the library of the Château de Saluce, when Joubert had torn the pistol from the hand of his master, flung it through the glass of the great window, and, turning from a paid servant into a man tremendous and heroic, had wrestled with him as the angel wrestled with Jacob.

We passed through the suburbs of the town, and then through the Ghetto. You never can imagine how much colour is in dirt till you see the Jews' quarter of Frankfort, how much poetry, and, also, how much perfume!

Joubert, who could not speak a word of the Hogs' language—as he was pleased to style the language of Germany—drove on, piercing the narrow streets to the heart of the town, and in the Kaiserstrasse he drew up. The General inquired the way of a policeman, and in five minutes or less we were before the doors of the Hôtel des Hollandais.

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## CHAPTER II

VON LICHTENBERG

NOWADAYS, when the Continent is inundated with travellers, when you are received at a great hotel with about as much consideration as a pauper is received at a workhouse, it is hard to imagine the old conditions of travel.

Weigand, the proprietor of the Hôtel des Hollandais, received us in person, backed by half a dozen waiters, all happy and smiling. They had the art of seeming to have known us for years; the luggage was removed as tenderly as though it were packed with Sèvres, and, led by the host, we were conducted to our rooms, a suite on the first floor.

When Marie Antoinette came to France, at the first halting-place beyond the frontier, she slept in a room whose tapestry represented the Massacre of the Innocents.

Our sitting-room in the Hôtel des Hollandais, a large room, had upon its walls the Siege of Troy, not in tapestry, but wall-paper. On this day, when the seeds of my future life were sown, it was a coincidence, strange enough, this

villainous wall-decoration, with its tale of war, ruin, and love.

Whilst my father was writing letters, I, active and inquisitive as a terrier, explored the suite, examined the town from the balcony of the sitting-room, and, finding the prospect unexciting, proceeded to the examination of the hotel.

A balcony surrounded the large central courtyard, where people were seated at tables, some smoking, some drinking beer from tall mugs with lids to them. Waiters passed to and fro; it was delightful to watch, delightful to speculate and weave romances about the unromantical drinkers—Jews, travellers, and traders; foreign to my eyes as the denizens of a bazaar in Samarcand.

Now, casting my eyes up, and led by the spirit that makes children see what is not intended for them, I saw, at a door in the gallery opposite to me, Joubert, who had just been superintending the stabling of the horses. He was coming on to the gallery from the staircase. A fat, ugly, German maidservant was passing him, and he—just as another person would say “Good day!”—slipped his arm round her waist and kissed her, made a grimace, and passed on round the gallery towards me.

“Why do you kiss them if you say their feet are so large, Joubert?” I asked, recalling his strictures on German females.

“Ma foi!” replied Joubert—“one does not kiss their feet.”

He leaned with me over the balcony, watching the scene below.

The hatred of Germans which filled the breast of Joubert was a hatred based on the firm foundation of Blücher. Joubert did not hate the English. This "cur of a Blücher," who turned up on Waterloo Day to reap the results of other men's work, gave him all the food for hatred he required.

"Joubert," said I, "do you see that man with the big stomach and watch-chain sitting there—the one with a cigar?"

"Mais, oui!" replied Joubert. "I know him well."

"What is he, Joubert?"

"He? His name is Bambabouff; he lives just beyond there, in a street to the right as you go out, and he sells sausages. And see you, beside him—yes, he—that German rat with the ring on his first finger. His name is Squintz; he sells Bambabouff the dogs and cats of which he makes his sausages. Ah, yes; if German sausages could bark and mew, you could not hear yourself speak in Frankfort. And he—look you over there!—sitting at the table behind Bambabouff, with the mug of beer to his lips, he is Monsieur Sauerkraut."

"And what does he do, Joubert?"

Before Joubert could answer, a man entered the hall—a dark man, just off the road, to judge by his travelling costume, and with a face the picture of which is stamped on my mind, an impression never to be removed.

"Ah, ha!" said Joubert. "Here comes the Marquis de Carabas. Hats off—hats off, gentlemen, to the Marquis de Carabas!"

Now, Bambabouff did look exactly like a person who might have made a fortune out of sausages, for Joubert had the art of hitting a person off, caricaturing him in a few words. Squintz's personality was humorously in keeping with his supposed business in life. And the new-comer—well, "the Marquis de Carabas" was his portrait in four words. Tall, stately, a nobleman a league off; handsome enough, with a dark, saturnine face, and a piercing eye that seemed at times to contemplate things far beyond the world we live in. The face of a mystic.

Weigand, washing his hands with invisible soap, accompanied this gentleman, half walking beside him, half leading the way. They had reached the centre of the hall when the stranger looked up and saw my small face and Joubert's cat-like physiognomy regarding him over the balustrade of the gallery.

He started, stopped dead, and stared at me. Had he seen a ghost he could not have come to a sharper pause, or have expressed more astonishment without speech.

Then, with a word to the landlord, who also looked up, he passed on, and we lost sight of him under the gallery.

"Ma foi!" said Joubert. "The Marquis de Carabas seems to know us, then."

"Joubert," said I, "that man knows me, and I'm-m-m——" "Afraid" was the word, but I did not say it, for I was a Mahon, with the family traditions to keep up.

"Know you?" cried Joubert, becoming seri-

ous. "Why, where did you ever see him before?"

"Nowhere."

Before Joubert could speak again Weigand appeared on the gallery.

"His Excellency the Baron Carl von Lichtenberg, to see his Excellency Count Mahon!" cried Weigand. "The Baron, hearing of his Excellency's arrival, has driven over from the Schloss Lichtenberg to present his respects in person. The Baron waits in the salon his Excellency's convenience."

Joubert took the card which Weigand presented, went to our sitting-room door, knocked, and entered.

I heard my father's voice: "Aha, the Baron! He must have got my letter from Mayence. Show him up."

Then I knew that the Marquis de Carabas was our relation Baron Carl von Lichtenberg, the man at whose house we were to stop. A momentary and inexplicable terror filled my soul, and was banished, giving place to a deep curiosity.

Then I heard steps on the gallery, and the Baron, led by the innkeeper, made his appearance, and, without looking in my direction, entered the sitting-room where my father was.

I heard their greeting, then the door was shut.

Waiters came up with wine. I leaned on the railing, wondering what my father and the stranger were conversing about, and watching the people in the courtyard below. Bambabouff

and his supposed partner had entered into an argument that seemed to threaten blows, and I had almost forgotten the Baron and my fear of him, watching the proceedings below, when the sitting-room door opened, and my father cried, "Patrick!"

He beckoned me into the room. A haze of cigar-smoke hung in the air, and by the table, on which stood glasses and decanters, sat Baron Carl von Lichtenberg, leaning sideways in his chair, his legs crossed, his arms folded, his dark countenance somewhat drooped, as though he were in meditation.

"This is Patrick," said my father. "Patrick, this is our relation and friend, the Baron Carl von Lichtenberg."

I had been taught to salute my elders and superiors in the military style; my dress was the uniform of the French schoolboy. I brought my feet together, and, stiff as a ramrod, made the salute. The Baron, with a half-laugh, returned it, sitting straight up in his chair to do so.

Having returned my salute, and spoken a few words, the Baron resumed his conversation with my father; and I, with the apparent heedlessness of childhood, played with Marengo, our boarhound, on the hearthrug before the big fireplace.

I say the apparent heedlessness of childhood. There are few things so deep as the subterfuge of a child. Whilst playing with the dog and pulling his ears, I was listening intently; not a word of the conversation was missed by me. They were talking mostly about the Emperor of the French,

a close friend of my father. He was just then on his southern tour, with the Empress; and the conversation, which included the names of De Morny and half a dozen others, would have been interesting, no doubt, to a diplomat. As I listened, I could tell that the Baron was sustaining the conversation, despite the fact that his thoughts were fixed elsewhere. I could tell that his thoughts were fixed on me; that he was watching me intently, yet furtively, and I knew in some mysterious manner that this man feared me—feared me, a child of nine!

I read it partly in his expression, partly in his furtive manner. He had seemed to dismiss me from his mind after our introduction; yet no man ever watched another with more furtive and brooding attention than the Baron Carl von Lichtenberg as he sat watching me.

"Well," said the Baron, rising to go, "tomorrow, we will expect you in the afternoon. Till then, farewell."

He saluted me as he left the room in the same forced, half-jocular manner with which he had returned my salute when I entered.

Then he was gone, and I was playing again with Marengo on the hearthrug, and my father, cigar in mouth, had returned to the letters he had been engaged on when the Baron was announced.

"Joubert," said I, as he tucked me up in my bed that night, "I wish we were home again. Joubert, I don't like the Marquis de Carabas."

Joubert grunted. His opinion of the Marquis

was the same as mine, evidently, but he was too much of a nursery despot to admit the fact. "Attention!" cried he, holding the candlestick in one hand, and the finger and thumb of the other ready to extinguish the light. "Attention!" cried Joubert, as though he were addressing a company of the "Growlers." "One!" I nestled down in bed. "Two!" I shut my eyes. "Three!" he snuffed out the candle.

That was the formula every night ere I marched off for dreamland with my knapsack on my back, a soldier to the last button of my gaiters.



## CHAPTER III

### " I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE "

I WAS awakened by the sound of a band, and the tramp, tramp, tramp of a regiment of soldiers—solid, rhythmical, and earthshaking.

A regiment of infantry was passing in the street below.

At Carlsruhe, at Mayence, I had heard the same sounds, and even my childish mind could recognise the perfect drill, the perfect discipline, the solidarity of these legions of the German Army.

The sun was shining in through the window which Joubert had just flung open; the band was playing, the soldiers marching, life was gay.

"Attention!" cried Joubert, turning from the window. "One!" up I sat. "Two!" out went a leg. "Three!" I was standing on the floor saluting.

I declare, if any one had put his ear to the door of my bedroom when I was dressing, or, rather, being dressed, in the morning, he might have sworn that a company of soldiers was drilling.

Mixed with the splashing of water and the gasps of a child being bathed came Joubert's military commands; the putting on of my small trousers was accompanied by shrill directions taken from the drill-book, and the full-dress inspection would have satisfied the fastidious soul of Maréchal Niel.

After breakfast the carriage was brought to the door, the baggage stowed, and, Joubert taking the directions from my father, we started for the Schloss Lichtenberg as the clocks of Frankfort were striking eleven.

No warmer or more beautiful autumn morning ever cast its light on Germany. By permission of the German Foreign Office, we had a complete set of road-maps, with our route laid down in red ink, each numbered, and each to be returned to the German Embassy in Paris on the conclusion of our tour.

We did not hurry—time was our own; we stopped sometimes at posthouses, with porches vine-overgrown, where I had plums, Joubert had beer, and my father chatted to the country people, who crowded round our carriage, and the stout innkeepers who served us.

The Taunus Mountains, blue in the warm haze of distance, beautiful with the magic of their pine forests, lay before us. At two o'clock we passed up the steep, cobble-paved main street of Homburg—a smaller Homburg then—and at three we had left the tiny village of Emsdorff and its schloss behind us.

We were in a different country here, the

mountains were very close, and the road threaded the edges of the great forest. I knew the Forest of Sénart, which lies quite close to the Château de Saluce, but the Forest of Sénart was tame as a flower-garden compared with this. The air was filled with the perfume and the singing and sighing of the great pine-trees, the carriage went almost without sound over the carpet of pine-needles, and once, in the deepest part, where all was green gloom and dancing points of light, my father called a halt, and we sat for a moment to listen.

You could hear the leagues of silence, and then, like the rustling of a lady's skirt, came the wind sighing across the tree-tops and loudening to the patter of falling fir-cones, and dying away again and leaving the silence to herself. The bark of a fox, the far-off cry of a jay, instantly peopled the place for my childish mind with the people of Grimm and Hoffmann—Father Barbel, the beasts that talked, and the robbers of the forest, more mysterious and fascinating than gnomes.

"Listen!" said my father. Mournful, faint, and far away came the notes of a horn.

"They are hunting in the forest," said my father; and, at the words, I could see in the gloom of the tree-caverns the phantom of the flying game pursued by the phantom of the ghostly huntsman, bugle to lips and cheeks puffed out, a picture in the fantastic tapestry that children weave from the colours and the sounds of life.

Then we drove on.

It was long past four, and I was drowsy with the fresh air, half drugged with the odour of the pine-trees, when we reached the gates of the park surrounding the schloss.

They were opened for us by a jäger, an old man in a green uniform, who saluted as we passed. Joubert whipping up the horses, we passed along the great avenue of elm-trees. The park, under the late afternoon sun, lay swathed in light, beautiful and so spacious that the far-off deer browsing in the sunshine seemed the denizens of their natural home.

I was not drowsy now, I was sitting erect by my father, my heart was filled with the wildest exaltation—mystery and enchantment surrounded me. I could have cried aloud with the wonder of it all; for I had been here before.

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## CHAPTER IV

ELOISE

"You have been here before?" Who does not know that mysterious greeting with which, when we turn the corner of some road, the prospect meets us?

Only a few years ago Charcot assured me that this strange sensation of the mind is a result of inequality in the rhythm of thought, a mechanical accident affecting one side of the brain. I accepted his explanation with a smile.

Seated now by my father as we dashed along the broad avenue my heart was on fire. I knew that at the turning just before us, the turning where the avenue bent upon itself, the house would burst upon us in full view. Unable to contain myself, scarce knowing what I did, I jumped on the front seat, and, standing, holding on to Joubert's coat, I waited.

The carriage turned the corner of the drive, the house broke into view, and my dream vanished.

It was like being recalled to consciousness from some happy vision by a blow in the face.

I could not in the least tell what sort of house it was that I expected to see, but I could tell that the house before me was not—it.

Vast and grey and formal, the Schloss Lichtenberg stood back-grounded by waving pine-trees; above it, coiling to the wind, the flag of Prussia, proclaiming that the King was a guest, floated in the evening sunshine. Before the huge porch, trampling the gravel, the horses of a hunting-party were reined in; the hunters were dismounting. They had been hawking; and on the gloved wrists of the green-coated jägers the hooded falcons shook their little bells.

"The King is here!" said my father, when he saw the flag.

The horses of the hunters were being led away, and most of the party had disappeared into the house when we drew up before the door.

Only two people stood to greet us on the steps, Baron Carl von Lichtenberg and a man—a great man, with a dominating face, and hooded eyes that never wavered, never lowered, eyes direct, far-seeing, and fearless as the eyes of an eagle.

I was in a terrible fright. Those words, "The King is here," had thrown me into consternation. Though my father was a close friend of Napoleon, I had never been brought into contact, as yet, with that enigmatical person. I knew nothing of Courts; and the idea that I was to sleep under the same roof as the King of Prussia, and be spoken to by him, perhaps, filled my imaginative mind with such a panic that I quite

forgot my ghostly dread of Baron von Lichtenberg.

I thought the big man with the strange eyes was the King. He was not the King. He was Bismarck.

Bismarck! Good heavens! How little we know of a man till we have seen him in his everyday mood! Bismarck slapped my father on the back—he had all the good-humour and boisterous manner of a great schoolboy—as he accompanied us up the steps. He had met my father several times before, and liked him, as every one liked him. And in the vast hall of the schloss, hung with trophies of the battle and the chase, I stood by, forgotten, whilst my father, in the midst of a group of gentlemen, stood talking to the boisterous great man, whose hard voice and tremendous personality dominated the scene.

I have said that Bismarck's voice was hard. It was, but it was not a mean or a commonplace voice; it was as full of force as the man, and you never forgot it once you heard it.

A large party of guests was at the schloss; and I, standing alone, felt very much alone indeed—shy, and filled with fear of the King. I was standing like this, when from the door of a great room opening upon the hall came a little figure skipping.

Gay as a beam of sunshine, she came into the vast and gloomy hall. She wore a blue scarf, white dress, frilled pantalettes, and shoes with crossed straps over her tiny insteps.

She glanced at me as she passed, making straight for Bismarck, whose coat she plucked at.

"Another time—another time!" growled he, letting drop a hand for the sunbeam to play with whilst he continued his conversation with the others. But I noticed that, despite his hardness and seeming indifference, the big hand, with the seal-ring on the little finger, caressed the child's hand; but she wanted more than this. Swinging round, still clasping his hand, but pouting, and with a finger to her lips, her eyes rested on me.

I had forgotten the King now; a flood of bashfulness overwhelmed me, and, as I stood there holding my képi in one hand, I, mesmerised by the figure in pantalettes before me, made a stiff little bow. Dropping Bismarck's hand, she made a little curtsey, and came skipping to me across the shining floor.

"And you, too, are a soldier?" said she, speaking in French. "Bon jour, M. l'Officier!"

"Bon jour, mademoiselle!"

"My name is Eloise," said the apparition of light. "Do you like my dress?"

"Oui, mademoiselle."

She pursed her lips. "Oui, mademoiselle? Oh, how dull you are! Now, if I were you, and thou wert I, know you what I would have said?"

"Non, mademoiselle."

"Non, mademoiselle! Oh, how droll you are! I would have said: 'Mademoiselle, your toilet is ravishing!' Now say it."

"Mademoiselle, your toilet is ravishing."

She laughed with pleasure at having made me



repeat the words. Despite her conversation, she had no touch of the old-fashioned, or the pert, or the objectionable about her. Brimming over with life, pure from its source, fresh as a daisy, sparkling as a dewdrop, sweetness was written upon her brow, across that ineffable mark of purity with which God stamps His future angels.

"And your name?" said she.

"Patrick," I replied.

"Pawthrick," said she, trying to put her small mouth round the word. "I cannot say it. I will call you Toto. Come with me"—leading me by the sleeve—"and I will introduce you to my mother. She is here"—drawing towards the door of the room from whence she had come—"in here. Do you know why I call you Toto?"

"Non, mademoiselle."

"He was my rabbit, and he died," said Eloise, as we entered a great salon where several ladies were seated conversing.

Towards one of these ladies, more beautiful in my eyes than the dawn, Eloise led me.

"Maman," said she, "this is Toto."

The Countess Feliciani—for that was the name of the mother of Eloise—smiled upon us. I dare say we made a quaint and pretty enough pair. She was, perhaps, thirty-five, the Countess Feliciani, a Parisienne, blue-eyed and golden-haired, and beautiful. Ah! when a blonde is beautiful, her beauty transcends the beauty of all brunettes.

I bowed, she spoke to me, I stammered. She put my awkwardness down to bashfulness, no doubt, but it was not bashfulness. I was in love

with the Countess Feliciani, stricken to the heart at first sight.

The love of a child of nine for a beautiful woman of thirty! How absurd it seems, but how real, and what a mystery! I swear that the love I had for that woman, love that haunted me for a long, long time, was equal in strength to the love of a full-grown man, with this difference: that it was immaterial, and, as far as my conscience tells me, utterly divorced from earthly passion.

"Now go and play," said the Countess. And Eloise led me away, I knew not whither.

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## CHAPTER V

### I SEE MYSELF, NOT KNOWING

BUT to the mind of a child the moment is everything. Had I been a man, my inamorata would have driven me to solitude and cigars. Being what I was, supper pushed her image to one side for the moment. Such a supper! Served specially for the pair of us in a little room, once, I suppose, some lady's boudoir, for the walls were hung with blue silk, and the ceiling was painted with flowers and cupids.

"Where is Carl?" asked Eloise of the German woman who served us.

"Carl has been naughty," replied she. "Carl must remain in his room till the Baron forgives him."

This woman, by name Gretel, was tall, angular, and hard of face. I did not care for her; and I noticed that she watched me from the corners of her eyes, somewhat in the same manner that the Baron had watched me as I played on the hearth-rug with Marengo in the hotel at Frankfort.

"Who is Carl?" said I.

"Carl von Lichtenberg?" replied Eloise. "Why, he is the Baron's son. He is eight, and he tore

my frock this morning right up here." She shifted in her chair, and plucked up the hem of her skirt to show me the place. "But it was not for that Carl has been put in prison, for I never told, did I, Gretel?"

Gretel grunted.

"Come," said she, "if you have finished supper you can have half an hour's play before bed."

She took the lamp in her hand, and led us from the room down a corridor; then, opening one side of a tall, double door, she led us into an immense picture-gallery.

Portraits of dead-and-gone Lichtenbergs stared at us from the walls—men in armour, knights dressed for the chase, ladies whose beauty or ugliness wore the veil of the centuries.

"Why, this is the picture-gallery!" cried Eloise.

"It is the shortest way to the playroom," grimly replied Gretel, as she stalked before us with the light.

We followed her, walking hand-in-hand, as the babes in the wood walked in that grim story, to which the pity of the robins is the sequel.

Suddenly Gretel halted. She stood lamp in hand before a picture.

"Ah, Toto!" cried Eloise.

I had seized her arm, I suppose roughly, in my agitation, for the picture before which Gretel had halted filled me with a sensation I can scarcely describe. Terror!—yes, it was terror, but something else as well. The feeling I had experienced in the carriage, the feeling, "I have been here before," held my heart.

It was the picture of a girl in the garb of many, oh, many years ago; yet I knew her; and out of the past, far out of the past, came that mysterious terror that filled my soul.

But for a moment this lasted, and then faded away, and things became commonplace once more; and Gretel was Gretel, the picture a picture, and in my hand lay the warm and charming hand of Eloise, which I had taken again.

"That is the picture of Margaret von Lichtenberg," said Gretel, looking at me as she spoke.

"How like she is to little Carl!" murmured Eloise. "Gretel, how like she is to little Carl!"

"And this," said Gretel, holding the lamp to a small canvas under the large one, "is a picture of an ancestor of yours, little boy—Philippe de Saluce. He loved her, but it was many years ago. Eloise, come closer; see, who is this little picture like?"

"Why, it is Toto!" cried Eloise, clapping her hands. "Toto, look!"

I looked. It was the picture of a boy, a picture of the Marquis Philippe de Saluce, taken when he was quite young.

I looked, but the thing made little impression upon me. Few people can recognise their likeness in another.

"Come," said Gretel, and she led us on to the playroom.

Now, here let me give you the dark and gloomy fact that Philippe de Saluce had cruelly killed Margaret von Lichtenberg in a fit of madness and rage. He had drowned her in the lake which lies

in the woods of Schloss Lichtenberg, one dark and sad day of December, in the year of our Lord 1611. He had slain himself, too, "body and soul," said the old chronicles. Alas, what man can slay his soul, or save it from the punishment of its crimes!

The playroom was full of toys, evidently Carl's, and we played till bedtime, Eloise and I. Then I was marched off to the door of my bedroom, where Joubert was waiting for me.

A pretty chambermaid scuttled away at my approach. I will say for Joubert that, judging from my childish recollections, this cat-whiskered old fire-eater had an attraction for ladies of his own class quite incommensurate with his age and personal charms.

My bedroom was a little room opening off my father's.

When Joubert had tucked me up I fell asleep, and must have slept several hours, when I was awakened by the sound of voices.

Joubert was assisting my father to undress. They were talking.

No man, I think, ever saw Count Mahon drunk. I have seen him myself consume two bottles of port without turning a hair. They built men differently in those days. But he was the soul of good-fellowship; and how much he and Bismarck had consumed together that night the butler of Schloss Lichtenberg alone knew.

"Joubert," said my father, "this relation of mine, Baron Lichtenberg, of the Schloss Lichtenberg, in the province of What-do-you-call-it—put

my coat on that chair—strikes me as being a German, and, more than that, mark you, Joubert, madness lies in the eyes of a man. I say nothing, but I am glad the blood of the Lichtenbergs does not run in the veins of the Mahons." Then, just before he fell asleep, and as I heard Joubert giving the bedclothes a tuck at his back: "Ireland for ever!" said my father. Yet he was a Frenchman, a Commander of the Legion of Honour, a soldier of the Emperor. *In vino veritas!*

Then I fell asleep, and scarcely had sleep touched me than I entered dreamland. I was in the pine-forest, standing just where the carriage had stopped and where the sound of the distant horn had come to us from the depths of the trees. I was lost, and some one was calling to me. It was very dark.

In this tragic dream, the terror and mystery of which even still haunts me, I could see nothing save the outlines of the trees dimly visible; and I followed the voice through the increasing gloom till at last the darkness complete and absolute ringed me round like an iron band, and I knew that the trees had ceased to be, and before me lay water.

A gasping and bubbling sound came from the invisible water, and I knew that it was the sound of a person drowning—drowning in the dark.

Then I awoke, and there were people in the room.

The room was lit by a nightlight dimly burning in a little dish. I, still possessed by the terror of the dream, lay very quiet. From the next room

came the deep and stertorous breathing of my father. The people in my room, as though knowing him to be under the influence of drugs or wine, seemed quite oblivious of his presence so close to them. Baron Lichtenberg was standing by the foot of my bed; beside him stood the woman Gretel. They were gazing upon me and talking about me, and I was chill with terror.

Peeping under my lids, I could see them, but in the dim light they could not tell that I was awake as they gazed at me and talked in a half-whisper.

"It is horrible," said the man, "but it was prophesied. Look at him. Can you doubt?"

"Yes," said the woman: "it is he, as surely as she is Margaret."

"And you say he recognised her picture?"

"Surely," replied the woman, "by his face, which I watched narrowly."

Now, the face of the man seen in the dim light was the face of Baron Carl von Lichtenberg with the veil removed, the veil which every man wears whilst playing his part in the social comedy. The face that was looking down at me was both merciless and mad. Child though I was, I dimly felt that this man was at enmity with me, and that he not only feared me, but hated me.

"And now," said the woman, in the same half-whisper, "what is to do? Will you bring them together?"

"To-morrow," said the Baron.

During this conversation, which had lasted some minutes, the Baron had never once taken



his eyes from my face. I could support it no longer. I opened my eyes, tossed my arms, and, like a pair of evil spectres, my visitors vanished from the room.

Now that I was free of their presence, my terror became tinged with curiosity. Who was Margaret? Who was the person they referred to as being me? *The other person?*

In those questions lay the mystery and tragedy of my life. I was to have the answer to them terribly soon.

I listened to the turret-clock striking the hours. This clock was of very antique make. The figure of a man in armour, larger than life, struck a ponderous bell with a mallet. You could see him in the turret, and my father had pointed him out to me as we drove up to the house.

As I listened, I pictured him standing there alone—a figure from another age and a far-distant time.

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## CHAPTER VI

### LITTLE CARL

I WAS awakened by the note of a horn blown by some ranger in the forest. The-sun was shining in through the window, night had vanished with all its dreams and fears, and Joubert was at the door.

Joubert, unsuccessful, perhaps, in one of his multifarious love-affairs, was grumpy ; and when I tried to explain about the nocturnal visitors he wouldn't listen. He knew my imaginative powers, and put my story down to them ; and, as for me, attracted by the events of the moment, as all children are, I had nearly forgotten the whole matter by breakfast-time.

I was led down by Joubert and given into the charge of Gretel. Breakfast was laid for Eloise and me in the same boudoir where we had supped the night before ; but lo and behold ! when we reached the room another child was there as well as Eloise—a boy of my own age ; a charming little figure dressed in the uniform of a Pomeranian grenadier.

“ This is Carl ! ” cried Eloise, pulling the little grenadier forward by the hand. “ This is Toto,

Carl. I forget his other name. No matter. I am hungry. Gretel, I pray you let us have breakfast."

Carl was dark ; and he met me without smiling, and took my hand without grasping it properly, and looked at me, not directly, but in a veiled manner curious in a child so young.

Carl repelled me, and yet attracted me. When I contrast his face with the portrait in the picture-gallery of the schloss, I can see now, with the eye of memory, the awful likeness between him and the dead and gone Margaret von Lichtenberg, just as I can see the likeness between myself and Philippe de Saluce.

The "family likeness"—that mysterious fact in life before which science is dumb—never was more manifest ; but what made the thing more curious, more deeply involved in mystery, was the fact that under the same roof, hundreds of years after the old tragedy of long ago, the facsimiles of the two actors should meet as children fresh to the world.

As for me this morning, I saw nothing in Carl von Lichtenberg but a little boy of my own age, somewhat fantastically dressed. The half-terror, the extraordinary sensation that the picture of Margaret von Lichtenberg had called up in my mind the night before, had expended itself and vanished, leaving me incapable of further psychic perception. Everything was commonplace again as the bread-and-butter that Gretel was cutting for us at the side-table.

The schloss was so vast, so solidly con-

structed, that no sound came to us from the other guests.

After breakfast, when we were running down a corridor making for the garden, and led by Eloise, a gentleman stopped us, and spoke a few words of greeting, and passed on.

"That was the King," said Eloise. "He is leaving to-morrow—he and Graf von Bismarck. We, too, are leaving the day after."

"You, too?" I cried, my childish heart recalling the lovely Countess Feliciani, who had been clean forgotten for twelve hours or more.

"Yes," said Eloise. "And there's mamma. Come along. See, she is with those ladies by the fountain."

We had broken into the garden, a wonderful and beautiful garden, with shaven lawns and clipped yew-trees, terraces, dim vistas cypress-walled, and, far away down one of these alleys, a sight to fascinate the heart of any child, the figure of a great stone man running. He was dressed in green lichen, lent him by the years; he held a spear in his hand, and he seemed in the act of hurling it at the game he was pursuing there beyond the cypress-trees at the edge of the singing pines.

For the garden became the forest without wall or barrier, except the shadow cast by the trees; and you could walk from the sunlight and the sound of the fountains into the dryad-haunted twilight and the old quaint world of the woods.

The Countess kissed Eloise; then she bent to

kiss me, and I—I turned my face away—a crimson face—and felt like a fool.

Some one laughed—a gentleman who was standing by. The Countess laughed; and then, to my extreme relief, some one came to my rescue.

It was little Carl. He had run into the house for his drum, and now he was coming along the path solemnly beating it, with Eloise for a faithful follower. I joined her; and away down the garden we went, hand in hand, marching in time to the rattle of the little drum.

Eloise snatched flowers from the flower-beds as we passed them, and pelted the drummer with them as he marched before us; and so we went, a gallant company, through the garden, past the running man, and under the forest-trees, the echoes and the blue jays answering to the drum.

My father, the Countess Feliciani, our host, and a number of ladies and gentlemen were in the garden. They laughed as we marched away; and when the shadow of the trees took us they forgot us, I suppose, and the pretty picture we must have made.

Scarcely twenty minutes could have elapsed when screams from the wood drew their startled attention, and out from the trees came Carl, dripping with water, without his drum, running and screaming as he ran.

After him ran Eloise and I.

"He tried to drown me in the lake in the wood!" screamed Carl, clasping the knees of his

father, who had run to meet him, and looking back at me. "He tried to drown me; he did it before—he did it before! Save me from him, father! Father! Father!"

Baron Lichtenberg's face, as he clasped the child, was turned on me. He was white as little Carl, and I shall never forget his expression.

"Did you try to drown my child?" he said. And he spoke as though he were speaking to a man.

Before I could reply Eloise struck in :

"Oh, Carl, how can you say such things? I saw it all. No, monsieur. They had a little quarrel as to who should play with the drum, and Toto pushed him, and he fell into the water. Was it not so, Carl?"

But Carl was incapable of answering. Screaming like a girl in hysterics he clung to the Baron, who had taken him in his arms.

"Now, then," said my father, who had come up. "What is this? What is the meaning of this, sir? Come, speak! Did you dare to——"

"Father," I said, "I pushed him, but I did not mean to hurt him—truly I did not."

"Do not blame him," said Von Lichtenberg, turning to the house with Carl in his arms. "It is Fate. Children do these things without knowing it. Do not punish him."

The hypocrisy of those last four words! Lost to my father, whose simple mind could not read the tones of a man's voice or guess what hatred can be hidden in honey.

"All the same," said my father, as the Baron

departed, "the child is half drowned. You have disgraced yourself. Off with you to Joubert, and place yourself under arrest."

I saluted.

"Bread and water," said my father; "and for three days."

I saluted again, and marched off to the house dejectedly enough.

As I went, little footsteps sounded behind me, and Eloise ran up. "You must not mind Carl, Toto," said she. "He cannot help crying. Listen, and I will tell you a secret. I heard mamma telling it to father: they thought I was asleep. Little Carl is a girl! Monsieur le Baron has brought her up as a boy to avoid something evil that has been prophesied—so mother said. What is 'prophesied,' Toto?"

"I don't know," I replied, my head too full of the dismal prospect of arrest and bread and water to trouble much about anything else.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MAN IN ARMOUR

NEXT day happened a thing which even still recurs to me in nightmare.

When I came down to breakfast, released from arrest by special intervention of the Baron, Carl was not there. Gretel said he had caught a cold from his wetting, and was confined to his room.

Late in the afternoon Eloise and I were in the great library. We had watched the King depart, the Graf von Bismarck, cigar in mouth, accompanying him. Carriage after carriage, containing guests, had driven away; and Eloise and I were pressing our noses against the panes of the window, looking at the park, and speculating on Carl and the condition of his cold, when the door opened, and Gretel looked in.

"Oh, there you are, children!" cried Gretel. "Well, and what are you doing with yourselves?"

"Nothing," yawned Eloise, turning from the window. "We have played all our games, haven't we, Toto?"

"Well, you are sure to be getting into mischief



if you are left to yourselves," said the woman. "Come with me, and I will show you a fine game. It is now a quarter to five. We will go up to the turret and see the Man in Armour strike the hour."

"Hurrah!" cried I, and Eloise skipped. It was the desire of both our hearts to see the mysterious Man in Armour close, and watch him strike the bell.

"Fetch your hats, then, for it is windy in the tower," said Gretel. And off we went to fetch them.

She led us through a door off the corridor, and up circular stone stairs that seemed to have no end, till we reached the room where the machinery was placed that drove the clock and struck the bell.

A ladder from here led us to the topmost chamber, where the iron man with the iron hammer stood before the iron bell.

This chamber was open to the four winds, and gave a splendid view of the mountains and the forest, and the lands lying towards Friedrichsdorff and beyond.

But little cared I for the scenery. I was examining the Man in Armour. He was taller than a real man, and his head was one huge mass of iron cast in the form of a morion. Clauss of Innsbruck had made him, and he struck me with a creepy sensation that was half fear. He stood with his huge hammer half raised; and the knowledge that at the hour he would wheel on his pivot and hit the bell vested him with an un-

canny suggestion of life, even though one knew he was dead and made of iron.

"He will not strike for ten minutes," said Gretel. "Gott! how cold it is here, and how windy! Come, let us play a game of blind-man's buff to keep ourselves warm."

My small handkerchief was brought into requisition, and Gretel blinded me, pinning the handkerchief to my képi. "And now," said Gretel, "I will blind Eloise, and you can try to catch me."

Then we played.

If you had been standing below you might have heard our laughter. I had just missed Eloise, when I was myself seized from behind by the waist, and Gretel's voice cried, "Now I've caught you!"

Even as she spoke a deep rumbling came from the machinery-room below. "Now I've caught you! Now I've caught you!" cried Gretel's voice, that seemed choking with laughter.

Something like a mighty bird swept past my forehead, tearing the képi from my head and the handkerchief from my eyes, and flinging me on the floor with the wind of its passage.

BOOM!

The great hammer of the Man in Armour had struck its first stroke, and with a thunderous, heart-shattering sound. The great hammer had passed my head so close that another half-inch would have meant death.

BOOM!

I lay paralysed, looking up at the iron figure

swinging to its work. He had nearly killed me, and I knew it. Again the hammer flew towards the bell.

BOOM!

The tower rocked, and the sound roared through the openings, and the joints of the iron figure groaned and the arms upflew once more.

BOOM!

And once again, urged by the might of the hammer-man, tremendous, apocalyptic, and sinister, the voice of the great bell burst over the woods.

BOOM!

The woodmen in the forests of the Taunus corded their bundles and prepared for home, for five o'clock had struck from the Schloss Lichtenberg.

At the first stroke, Eloise had sat down on the floor, screaming with fright at the noise. She was sitting there still, with her eyes bandaged, when the sound died away.

"What an escape!" cried Gretel, who was white and shaking. "Little boy, had I not plucked you away, the hammer would have killed you! It would have killed you had it not been for me!"

But in my heart I knew better than that.

. . . . .

That night I told Joubert of the thing. He said Gretel was a fool.

"Joubert," I said, "I am afraid of this house,

and I am afraid of Gretel; and I want to say my prayers again, please, for I was not thinking when I said them just now."

I said them again; and Heaven knows I needed them more than any prince trapped in the ogre's castle of a fairy-tale.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE HUNTING-SONG

SCARCELY had Joubert left me than a faint sound, stealing from below, made me sit up in bed—the sound of violins tuning up.

Ever since I could perceive the difference between musical sounds, music has fascinated me, thrilled me, filled me with hauntings. Music can make me drunk, music can make me everything but bad; but it is not in the province of music to do that.

A band of wandering musicians had come to the schloss, and was preparing to entertain the guests in the great hall.

Our rooms were quite close to the gallery surrounding the hall. I could hear the complaint of the violin-strings protesting their readiness, and the deep, gasping grunts of the 'cello saying as plainly as a 'cello could speak, "Begin, begin."

Then the music struck up—a gay, dashing tune, vivid as a spring landscape with the daffodils dancing in the wind; the high tremulous notes of a piccolo hovering over the

music of the strings as a skylark hovers in the air.

It was more than mortal child could stand, to hear all that and not to be there.

I hopped out of bed, and made for the door. I had opened it, when the thought came to me that Joubert might come back to the room, as he sometimes did, to see if I were asleep; so I ran to the bed and popped the pillow under the bedclothes. I often slept with the clothes over my head, and the room was so dark that the protuberance of the pillow gave quite a striking representation of a small boy curled up in slumber.

Then I came down the passage to the gallery overlooking the hall. Down below the place was brilliantly lit.

The musicians—four men in long coats, with long hair, and two of them bearded—were opposite to me.

Seated about were the guests: my father, the Countess Feliciani, Count Feliciani, Major von der Goltz, General Hahn, and another gentleman whose name I did not know. Baron von Lichtenberg was not there.

A servant was handing coffee, and the guests were chatting in two little groups, and seemed quite oblivious of the music that was ravishing my simple heart.

The spring song ceased, the daffodils danced no longer in the wind, the skylark dropped from the sky, and the musicians fell chatting one to

another in an undertone whilst they tuned up again. The one most directly facing me—a man quite young, with oh, such a good, kind, sweet face!—glanced up as he was raising his violin and caught sight of me in my little nightshirt away up in the gallery, peeping down at him and his brethren. He evidently knew at once that I was one of the children of the schloss, a truant from bed, and that my portion would be smacks if I were discovered; for, though a momentary smile lit his face, he made no sign or attempt to point me out to his fellows.

They broke into a hunting tune. I could tell, from the lilt of the music, it was the chase that was speaking in the inarticulate language of the strings. The piccolo had discarded his instrument for a horn; I could hear the yapping of the dogs, and the pack bursting into full cry; the horn, and the echoes of the horn from the rocks and woods, the hallali. Gay, ghostly, beautiful, the music swept one along with it, the very guests below forgot their chatter; I could see them keeping time with their feet. Enchantment had seized upon the old schloss, the green-coated jägers crowded, as if by permission, to the passage entrance, and their harsh voices took up the song which now broke from the lips of the magicians in the long coats to the accompaniment of the violins and the hunting-horn, a song the words of which were not translated for me till long, long afterwards:

Hound and horn give voice and tongue,  
Fill the woods with echoes gay ;  
Let your music sweet be flung  
To the Brocken far away.

Jagers with the horns ye wind,  
Hounds whose tongues the chase shall bay ;  
Let your voice the echoes find  
Of the Brocken old and grey.

Hark ! amidst the bracken green  
Bells the buck whose vigil keeps  
Danger from the hind unseen,  
Danger from the fawn that sleeps.

Hears he us, yet heeds us not,  
Dreams he that we are the wind ;  
Phantoms we of hounds forgot,  
Ghosts of huntsmen long since blind.

Dreams we are the forest's breath  
Waking to the touch of day ;  
Recks not 'tis the horn of Death  
Dying in the distance grey.

Hound and horn give voice and tongue——

And through it all the horn, now clear and ringing, now caught and dying in the echoes of the forest, now lost in the echoes of the Brocken, the wild notes flying before the phantom of the flying stag ; ever the horn threading the gushing music of the violins, the voices of the musicians, and the chorus of the jägers.

More music came after this, but nothing so beautiful ; and as the musicians put their instruments away, and prepared to go, I nodded to



the happy-faced one who had spied me. He smiled, and I trotted back to bed. I had been there listening in the gallery for a full hour, and I was cold as ice, but no one had seen me, only the violin-player who had the face of a good angel.

I shut the door cautiously, and crept back to bed. But there was something on the bed, something on the protuberance caused by my pillow. It was the handle of a knife. The blade of the knife was plunged into the mound of bedclothes just where my head would have been.

It was Joubert's knife—his "couteau de chasse," a thing he was immensely proud of, a thing as keen as a razor.

That was just like one of Joubert's tricks. He had come in, found my device, and left this, as much as to say, "You'll see what you'll get in the morning."

I plucked the knife out and put it on the floor. Then I crawled into bed.

As I lay thinking of the music, my restless fingers kept digging into holes in the sheet. Half a dozen holes, or rather slits, there were. One might have thought that the hunting-knife of Joubert had been furiously plunged again and again into the heap of bedclothes before being left sticking there. But I did not think of this: the knife was Joubert's. Besides, my head was alive with those dreams that stand at the door of sleep to welcome the innocent in.

I heard again the voices of the musicians:

Hark ! amidst the bracken green  
Bells the buck whose vigil keeps  
Danger from the hind unseen,  
Danger from the fawn that sleeps.

Then I, like the fawn, fell asleep, ignorant of  
Fate as the fawn, and of the extreme wickedness  
of the heart of man.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FAIRY-TALE

"LEVEZ-VOUS! Levez-vous! Levez-vous! Ta-ra-ra! Pom, pom! Hi! God's teeth, my knife! What does it here?"

Joubert could sound the *réveillé* with his mouth almost as well as a trumpet, and he was grand at imitating the big drum.

Up I shot in bed, rubbing my eyes.

"Your what?"

"My knife. Ha! I've caught you. Cutting your sticks and carving your name with my *couteau de chasse*! You have been to my bedroom. Don't answer me! You have been to my bedroom, and taken it from the pocket of my coat. A pretty thing!"

Joubert's temper all yesterday had been savage; his infernal amours were not prospering, it seems. In fact, as I afterwards learned from his own lips, a scullion, resenting his addresses, had called him an old French dog without teeth.

"It was sticking in my pillow when I came to bed!" cried I, indignant at the accusation.

"Your pillow, when you came to bed!"

Joubert seized me, ran me across the room by

my shoulders to a large mirror, pointed to the reflection of my shrinking form, and yelled :

"Do you see that?"

"Mais, oui."

"Then you see a liar."

"But, Joubert——"

"Not a word!"

"But I want to tell you——"

"Not a word!"

That was always Joubert's way—"Not a word."

"But I want to *tell* you!"

"Not a word!" And he jabbed the sponge in my mouth, for I was standing by this time in the bath.

I never could tell whether Joubert was joking or in earnest, so I said no more; but it was none the less irritating to be called a liar by Joubert, whose lies about battle, murder, and sudden death were palpable, and sometimes cynically self-confessed.

Little Carl did not appear at breakfast, and Eloise was despondent, not about Carl, but about going away. She would not touch jam, and she made use sometimes, in a secretive manner, of a handkerchief, small enough, goodness knows, yet chiefly composed of lace.

"It is not the going away," said Eloise; "it is the parting from friends that makes going away so sad."

She was a terribly sentimental child by fits and starts, falling into sentiment and falling out of it again with the facility of a newly dislocated limb from its socket.

Next moment I was chasing her down the corridor, both of us making the corridor echoes ring with our laughter. At the end, just by the glass door leading to the garden, down she plumped in a corner, and put her little pinafore over her head.

I believe she wanted, or expected, me to pull the pinafore away and kiss her, but I didn't. I just pulled her up by the arm, and we both bundled out into the garden, and in a moment she had forgotten kisses amidst the flowers, plucking the asters and the Michaelmas daisies, and chasing the butterflies that were still plentiful in the late summer of that year.

We passed the fountain, and stopped to admire the running man. His face, worn away by time and weather, still had a ferocious expression. One wondered what he was chasing with the spear that seemed for ever on the point of leaving his hand.

"Toto," said Eloise, "yesterday, when we took the drum with us, we forgot to bring little Carl's sticks: we left them by the pond."

"So we did," said I.

"Let's go and fetch them," said Eloise.

"Come on," I replied.

We took the forest path leading to the lake.

It was like plunging into a well of twilight.

These trees that surrounded us were no tame trees of a pleasaunce: they were the outposts of the immortal forest, a thing as living and mysterious as the sea. Their twilight was but

the fringe of a robe, extending for hundreds and hundreds of square leagues.

I am a lover of the forest. The forest, and the sea, and the blue sky of God are all that are left to remind us of the youth of the world and the poetry of it, and the old German forests retain most of that lost charm. They are haunted. The forests of the volcanic Eiffel, the Hartz, the Taunus, still hold the ghost of Pan. I have been afraid in them.

By the lake, fringed with ferns, Eloise fell into another sentimental and despairing fit. We were sitting on the lake edge, and I was playing with the recovered drumsticks.

"Ay, di mi!" wept Eloise. "When you are gone! I mean when I am gone—when we are departed——"

"Courage!" said I.

"It is the going away," sniffled Eloise, carefully arranging her little skirt around her.

"I know," I said, rattling the sticks; "but it will be soon over."

Unhappy child! I believe she had fallen really in love with me, unconscious of the fact that if I cared for any woman in the world it was for the lovely Countess Feliciani, her mother, and that I had no eyes at all for a thing of my own age in frilled pantalettes, no matter how pretty she might be.

Before Eloise could reply to my unintentionally brutal remark, a figure came out from amidst the trees and towards us. It was one of the jägers, a man past middle age, bent and warped

like a tree that has stood the tempest for years.

This man's name was Vogel, and good cause I have to remember that name.

"Aha!" said he. "The children! Fräulein Eloise, Gretel is seeking for you in the house."

We rose.

"Come," said Eloise.

And I was turning to go with her; but Vogel, who held a stick in one hand and a small penknife in the other, said to me as he whittled at the stick:

"See you, have you ever made a whistle?"

"No," I replied, interested, despite the man's German accent and his face, which was not attractive, for his cheeks were sucked in as though he were perpetually drawing at a pipe, and his nose, too small for his face, was hooked. I have never seen a nose so exactly like the beak of a screech-owl.

Vogel, without a word, sat down and began cutting away at the whistle.

"Are you not coming?" said little Eloise.

"In a minute," I replied, looking over Vogel's shoulder at his handiwork.

"Then stay," she pouted. And away she ran.

I looked on at Vogel and his work, one foot preparing to go, the other foot holding me.

"There is an old woman who lives in the wood," said Vogel, as he cut at the stick, "and she makes whistles."

"Does she?" I replied.

"She does," said Vogel. "She makes them of

silver, and of glass, and of gold, and when you blow on them they go——”

A strange warbling sound filled the wood. It was Vogel showing how the whistles of the old woman sounded when you blew into them.

He had put a bird-call—the thing foresters use for snaring birds—between his lips. He removed it again with a laugh, and went on with his work.

“She lives in a house made of gingerbread,” went on the fowler. “And know you what the panes of her windows are made of?”

“No.”

“Sugar, clear as your eye. And guess you what the door is made of?”

“No.”

“Marzipan. Ah! that is a good house to live in,” said Vogel. And I mentally concurred.

“She keeps white mice, and rabbits with green eyes.”

“Green eyes.”

“Yes; and she gave little Carl a rabbit for himself last time I took him to see her. There.” He handed the whistle, which was finished, up to me over his shoulder, and I blew on it and found it good.

“Would you like to have a rabbit like that?” asked Vogel, filling a pipe and lighting it.

“I would.”

“Well, you can have one. I will get one for you to-morrow, or to-day, if you like to come with me to see the old woman who makes the whistles. Will you come?”

“What time?” said I, hesitating.



"Now," said Vogel.

My answer was cut short by a sound from behind—the clinking of a bucket—and Joubert and a stout servant-maid appeared from the path leading to the lake. They were coming to gather water-plants for some household decoration.

Joubert was gallantly carrying the bucket.

Vogel sprang to his feet.

"I must go," said he. "It was my joke. I am the old woman who makes the whistles."

Off he went.

I have often thought since that much weariness, much sorrow to me, and much plotting and planning to the Great Writer of love-stories Who lives above, might have been saved if I had gone that day with Vogel to see "the old woman who makes the whistles."

"What was Skull-face saying to you?" asked Joubert.

"He made me this," said I, showing him the pithed stick.

The Felicianis departed at three o'clock. Eloise, with her cheeks flushed, was laughing with excitement: she seemed quite to have forgotten her grief. Four horses drew their carriage. They were bound for Homburg, where they would pass the night before going on to Frankfurt.

I remember, as the carriage drove off, the Countess Feliciani looked back and smiled at us—at my father, myself, Von Lichtenberg, Major von der Goltz, and General Hahn, all grouped on the steps. God! had she known the happenings

to follow, how that smile would have withered on her lips!

Carl was still invisible, and the great schloss, now that Eloise had gone, seemed strangely empty to me. It is wonderful how much space a child can fill with its presence. Eloise's happy little form had diffused itself, spreading happiness and innocence far and wide, and dispelling I know not what evil things. If a rose can fill a room with its perfume, who knows how far may reach the perfume of an innocent and beautiful soul!

At six o'clock I was in the library; a box of tin soldiers, which my father had bought for me at Carlsruhe, stood open on the table, and the armies were opposed.

I was not too old to play with soldiers like these, for there were shoals of them: officers, and drummers and gunners, cannon, flags—everything. As a matter of fact, Major von der Goltz had been playing with me, too, and I'll swear he took just as much interest in them as I.

He had gone now, and I had tired of the soldiers. I turned my attention to the books. I was walking along by the shelves, examining the backs of the volumes and trying to imagine what the German titles could mean, when suddenly, from amidst the books, I heard a child's voice.

The child seemed singing and talking to itself, and the sounds seemed to come from the volumes on the shelves. It was strange to hear it coming from amidst the books like that, as though some

volume of fairy-tales had suddenly become vocal, and Hänsel, playing by the witch-woman's door, had found a voice.

Then I noticed that the books just before me were not real books, but imitation.

In the centre of one of these imitation book-backs there was a little brass knob. I pressed it, and the wall gave way, disclosing a passage. The book-backs were but the covering of a narrow door.

This passage, suddenly disclosed, fascinated me.

It was dimly lit from above, and ended in a door of muffed glass. About half-way down on the floor stood a toy horse—a dappled-grey horse with a broom-like tail and a well-worn saddle—evidently left there by some child, and forgotten.

I could hear the child's voice now distinctly. He or she was singing, singing in a monotonous fashion, just as a child sings when quite alone.

I came down the passage to the door. The muffing of the door had been scratched. There was a spyhole, evidently made by a child, for it was just on a level with my own eye, and there was a word scratched on the paint of the muffing which, though I had to read it backwards, I made out to be—

CARL.

I peeped through the hole. It disclosed a room, evidently a nursery, plainly but pleasantly furnished. On the window-seat, looking out and drumming an accompaniment on the glass to the tune he was singing, knelt Carl.

I looked for the handle of the door, found it, turned it, opened the door, without knocking, and entered the room.

The child at the window turned, and, when he saw me, flung up his arms with a gesture of terror and glanced round wildly, as if for somewhere to hide. It cut me to the heart; it frightened me, too—this terror of the child for me. I remembered Eloise's words: "Little Carl is a girl."

"Gretel! Gretel! Gretel!" cried the child as I ran forward, took him in my arms, and kissed him on the forehead.

Whether he had expected me to hit him or not I don't know; but at this treatment he ceased his cries, and, pushing me away from him, looked at me dubiously.

"I won't hurt you, little Carl!" And at the words a whole ocean of tenderness welled up in my heart for the trembling and lonely little figure in the soldier's dress, this Pomeranian grenadier, timorous as a rabbit. I must, in this heart of mine, have some good; for, boy as I was, with all the fighting instincts of the Mahons in my blood, I felt no boyish ridicule for this creature that a blow would make cry, but all the tenderness of a nurse, or a person who holds a live and trembling bird in his hand.

"I won't hurt you. I didn't *mean* to knock you in the pond."

"But you did," said Carl, still dubious.

"I know, and I'm sorry. See here, Carl, I'll give you my dog."

"Your big dog?" asked Carl, for he had seen Marengo bounding about the lawn.

"Yes," said I, knowing full well that the promise was about equivalent to the promise of the moon.

The little hand fell into mine.

"Gretel," said Carl, now in a confidential tone, "told me you would kill me if I played with you, or went near you, or if I looked at you."

"Oh, how wicked!" I cried. "*I* kill you!" And I clasped the little form more tightly.

"I know," said Carl.

He was a personage of few words, and those two words told me quite plainly that he believed me and had confidence in me.

"It's not you," he said, after a pause. "She said you didn't want to do it, but you'd have to do it, for you were a bad man once and you'd have to do it over again," said Carl. "What you'd done before, for some one had said so. I didn't know who they were." He had got the tale so mixed up that I could scarcely follow his meaning. "When will you give me the dog?" he finished, irrelevantly enough.

"I'll give you him — I'll give you him tomorrow," I said, "if father will let me. But he's sure to, if I ask him."

Scarcely had I finished speaking than the door opened and Gretel appeared.

She stood for a moment when she saw us together, as though the sight had turned her into stone.

Then she came towards us.

"How did you get here?" she said to me.

"Through that door," I answered her.

She took me by the hand to lead me away. As she did so, something closed round my neck, and something touched me on the cheek.

It was Carl, who had put his arms round my neck and kissed me.

Ah, little Carl, little Carl! Little we knew how next we should meet, or the manner of that meeting!

## CHAPTER X

### THE DEATH OF VOGEL

"Joubert, what is father doing?"

"He is playing cards down below with the gentlemen."

I was undressing to go to bed that same night, and Joubert was expediting my movements, anxious, most likely, to go down stairs and drink with the house-steward.

"Joubert, I wish he were here."

"Why?"

"I don't know; but I am frightened."

"Of what?"

"I don't know."

Joubert blew out the light and left the room, and I lay looking at the shadows the furniture made on the wall by the dim glimmer of the nightlight.

The door leading to my father's room was open. This did not give me any comfort—rather the reverse; for the next room was in darkness, and I could not help imagining faces peeping at me from the darkness.

When frightened at night like this, I generally told myself fairy-tales to keep away the terrors.

I tried this to-night with a bad result, for the attempt instantly brought up Vogel and the old woman who lived in the wood.

Now, there was something in this fairy-tale that my heart knew to be evil and malign. What this something was I could not tell, but it was there, and the story did not bring me any peace.

The clock in the turret struck ten, and I saw vividly the Man in Armour up there alone in the dark, wheeling to his work.

There was something terrific in this iron man. A live tiger was a thing to me less fearful. Not for worlds would I have gone up alone to watch him at his work, even at a safe distance. The fact that the hammer had nearly killed me did not contribute much to this fear. I knew that was not his fault. I was terrified by *him*.

Then I fell thinking of my promise to little Carl to give him Marengo, and, thinking of this, I fell asleep.

At least, I closed my eyes and entered a world of vague shapes. And then I entered a wood. The cottage of the old woman who made the whistles was before me. It had a window on either side of the door, and in one window there were jars of sugar-sticks.

I knocked at the door. It flew open, and there stood Vogel, the jäger with the hooked nose. He smilingly beckoned me in. I entered, and, hey presto! his smile vanished with the closing of the door, and I was on a bed, and he was smothering me with a pillow. And then I



awoke, and I was in bed and I was being smothered by a pillow.

Oh, horror! Oh, the horror of that waking! Some one was lying upon me; a pillow was over my face, crushing it! I shrieked, and my shriek did not go an inch beyond my mouth. My nose was crushed flat; my mouth, open to scream, could not close again. The pillow bulged in, and then, flung away like a feather by the wind, went the form that was crushing me and the pillow that was smothering me; and shriek upon shriek—the most horrid, the most unearthly, the most soul-sickening—shriek after shriek tore the air; and, jumping upon my feet, standing on the bed with arms outspread, I gazed on the sight before me, adding my thin voice to the outcries that were piercing the schloss from cellar to turret.

On the floor, lit for my view by the halfpenny nightlight calmly burning in its little dish, Marengo and a man were at war—and the victory was with Marengo. The great dog had got the man by the back of the neck. The man, face down, was drumming on the floor with his fists and feet, just as you see an angry child in a fit of passion.

The dog was dumb, and making mighty efforts to turn the man on his face. He lifted him, he shifted him, he dragged him hither and thither. The man, screaming, knew what the dog wanted, and clung to the floor.

Suddenly the dog sprang away, and, like a flash of lightning, sprang back. He had got

the throat-hold, and a deep gobbling, worrying sound was the end of the man and his hunting for ever.

For the man was Vogel. I saw that, and then I saw nothing more.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DUEL IN THE WOOD

WHEN I gained consciousness I was in my father's room, lying on the bed. Joubert was sitting on the bed beside me.

"Joubert," said I, "where is he?"

"Who?"

"Vogel."

"God knows!" said Joubert. "Here, drink this."

It was brandy, and it nearly took my breath away, but it gave me life.

"Now," said Joubert, putting the glass on the table by the bed and taking my small trousers in his hand, "put these on."

"Why am I to dress, Joubert?"

"We are going away. Ah, fine doings there has been! And who knows the end of it all?"

As he helped me to dress, he told me of what had occurred. The gentlemen below had been playing cards when the shrieks of Vogel had sundered the card-players like the sword of death.

Rushing upstairs, they had found Marengo guarding the dead body of Vogel, and me stand-

ing on the bed screaming. When my father caught me in his arms I told all—of Vogel's attempt to smother me, of the knife I had found in my pillow, and of the occurrence in the bell-tower. It must have been my subconscious intelligence speaking, for I remember nothing of it; but it was enough.

"Then," said Joubert, "the General, with you tucked under his left arm, turned on the Baron. 'What is this?' said he. 'Assassination in the Schloss Lichtenberg!'

"'Liar!' cried the Baron. And before the word was well from his mouth, crack! the General had hit him open-fisted in the face, and the mark sprang up as if the General had hit him red-handed. Mordieu! I never saw a neater blow given, or one so taken, for the Baron never blinked. He just nodded his head, as if to say, 'Yes.' Then he put his arm in Count Hahn's, and the General turned to Major von der Goltz, and, taking him by the arm, followed the others. Then word came to pack up and have you ready, for we are leaving the schloss this night. Now then, *vite!*"

"But, Joubert, I remember nothing of all that."

"All what?"

"Telling my father of Vogel and the bell."

"Well, whether you remember it or not, there it is."

"And the knife—— Joubert, did you not, you yourself, stick the knife in the pillow?"

"I!" said Joubert. "When would you catch me playing such fool's tricks as that?"

"Joubert."

"Yes?"

"I think I know why they wanted to kill me."

"Why?"

"Because they thought I would kill little Carl."

Joubert grunted.

"Here," said he, "hold up your foot till I lace that boot."

Scarcely had he done so when General Hahn appeared at the door.

"Dress the child, pack, and be ready to leave the schloss at once!" he cried to Joubert. "The horses are being got ready."

"I have my orders," replied Joubert.

He grumbled and talked to himself, and swore, as he got the rest of my clothes on, for I was quite unable to help myself. And then, when I was ready, he gave me a great smacking kiss that nearly took my breath away, and his hand was shaky, and I had never seen it shake before, and he had never kissed me before in his life. Then he left me sitting on the bed, and I heard him in the next room, where the dead man was, packing my things.

In the midst of all this the castle clock struck eleven.

And now from below came the trampling of horses, and the crash of wheels on gravel, and the harsh German voices of the servants. Doors banged, and a man came up, flung our door open, and cried, "Ready!" And Joubert, with a port-manteau on his shoulder, led me along by the

hand down the corridor, the servant following with the rest of our luggage.

Down in the hall, which was brilliantly lit, Major von der Goltz and my father stood talking together in one corner, and Von Lichtenberg and General Hahn stood by the great fireplace, their hands behind them, neither of them speaking, and both with their eyes on the floor as if in profound thought. And I noticed that the great red mark on the Baron's cheek was still there, just as if a blood-stained hand had struck him.

When they saw us coming, with Marengo following us, Von Lichtenberg and the General took their hats from a table close by and walked towards the door, which was opened for them by a servant.

General Hahn held under his arm a bundle done up in a cloak, and from it protruded two sword-hilts.

My father, taking my hand and followed by Major von der Goltz, came after the Baron.

It was a clear and windy night: flying clouds were passing over the moon. Two carriages were drawn up at the door, and a dozen men with torches blazing and blowing in the wind gave light whilst our luggage was put in.

The first carriage was our own; the second a carriage belonging to the schloss.

Joubert put our luggage in and mounted on the box; then my father, bowing to Major von der Goltz, held the door open; the Major, with a slight bow to my father, got in. We followed,

the carriage started, running torch-men leading us and following behind.

"Are we truly going away, father?" I asked, nestling close to him and holding his hand.

"Yes, my child; we are going away."

"Why are those men with torches running with us?"

"You will see—you will see. Major von der Goltz, I hope those words I have just said to you will not be forgotten in the event——"

"They shall be remembered," said the Major.

Up to this all the company at the schloss had been hail-fellow-well-met one with the other. My father had addressed Von der Goltz as Franz, and the Major had been just as familiar in his manner, but all this was now changed. The two men were as stiff and formal as though they had never met before—one facing the other, bolt upright, and with heads somewhat averted, as I could see by the dancing torchlight; and in my childish heart I wondered at this.

As we slowed up to pass the great gates of the avenue, I heard the wheels of the other carriage coming behind, and as we made the turning, I saw it, with the light of the torches glinting on the headpieces of the horses, and behind the carriage the plumes of the pine-trees showed against the moon, and they looked like the plumes of a hearse.

The estate of Von Lichtenberg stretched for a mile and more beyond the gates; and it seems that it is not etiquette to kill a man on his own

estate, any more than it is etiquette to strike a man in his own house.

We took the forest road. Mixed with the sound of hoofs and wheels I could hear the footsteps of the running torch-men: the flickering light shot in between the tree-boles, disturbing the wood creatures, and, as we went, all of a sudden, the jägers running with us broke out in a chorus of what seemed lamentation mixed with curses.

Von der Goltz sprang up on the seat and looked ahead.

"A white hare is running before us," said he. "That is bad for Baron Carl von Lichtenberg."

My father bowed slightly, as if to a half-heard remark.

A white hare, it seems, was the sign of death in the house of Lichtenberg.

Turning a bend of the road, the carriage drew up.

We waited for a moment till the sound behind told us that the second carriage had also stopped. Then we alighted.

"Joubert," said my father, handing him a packet, "you will stay here with the dog. Open this packet, should anything befall me. Patrick, you will come with me."

"Dieu vous garde!" said Joubert. And, following the others, we entered the forest.

I felt sick and faint with fear, and the light of the dancing torch-flames made me reel. I held tight to my father's hand, and I remember



thinking how big and strong and warm it was. What was about to happen I could not guess, but I knew that the shadow of death was with us, and the chill of him in my heart.

We had not gone more than two hundred yards when we came to a clearing amidst the trees—a breezy, open space, that the moon lit over the waving pine-tops. Here the jägers divided themselves into two lines, five yards or so apart, and stood motionless as soldiers on parade. Baron von Lichtenberg, with his arms folded, stood with his back to us, looking at the clouds running across the face of the moon; and the two army officers, drawing aside, began to undo the swords from the bundle.

“Patrick,” said my father, leading me under the shade of the trees, “I struck my kinsman in his own house to-night. The only excuse I can make for that action is to kill him, so let this be a lesson to you the length of your life.” He stopped, stooped, hugged me in his arms, and then strode out into the torchlight, and took his sword from Von der Goltz.

It was a curious little speech, or would have been from any one but an Irishman. But I was not thinking of it. I was mesmerised by the sight before me.

When the two men took their swords they returned them to the seconds. The swords were then bent to prove the steel, and measured, and then returned to the principals.

Then the jägers moved together almost shoulder to shoulder, and in the space between the two

lines of torches the duellists took their stand. There was dead silence for a moment.

I could hear the wind in the pines, and the guttering and slobbering of the flambeaux, and a fox barking, away somewhere in the forest.

Then came General Hahn's voice, and, instant upon it, the quarrelling of the rapiers.

The antagonists were perfect swordsmen; the rapiers were now invisible, now like jets of light as the torchlight shot along them. Over the music of the steel, the wind in the pine-trees said "Hush!" and the barking of the fox still came from the far distance.

At first you might have thought these two gentlemen were at play, till the fury subdued by science broke loose at last, and the rings and flashes of light and the clash of the steel spoke the language of the thing and the meaning of it.

It was a duel to the death; and I, looking on, my soul on fire, agony in my heart, my hands thrust deep in the pockets of my caped overcoat, counted the bits of biscuit-crumbs in those same pockets, and made tiny balls from the fluff, and noted with deep and particular attention the extent of a hole in one of the linings. The interior of my overcoat pockets marked itself upon my memory as sharply and insistently as the scene before me—such a strange thing is mind.

Yet I knew that, if Von Lichtenberg were the conqueror, my father would die, and I would be left to the mercy of Von Lichtenberg.

Yet, despite all my fears—oh, that heroic

moment! The concentrated fury of the fight beneath the singing pines, lit by the blazing torches! Then, in a flash, it was over. Von Lichtenberg's sword flew from his hand; his arms flung out as though he were crucified on the air; and then, just as though he were a man of wax before a fiery furnace, he fell together horribly, and became a heap on the ground.

The hammer of Thor could not have felled him more effectually than the rapier that had passed through his armpit like a ribbon of light.

I ran to my father, and clung to him.

General Hahn, on one knee, was supporting Von Lichtenberg in his arms. The Baron's face was clay-coloured, his head drooped forward, and his jaw hung loose.

Hahn, with his knee in the armpit to suppress the terrible bleeding, called for a knife to rip the sleeve; and as they were doing it the stricken man came to and yawned.

He yawned just as a man yawns who is deadly tired and half roused from sleep, and he tossed his arms just in the same way. He seemed to care about nothing; his weariness was so great.

And then, just as a man speaks who is half roused and wants to drop asleep again:

"Hahn."

"I am here."

"Ah, yes! I leave the child to your care and Gretel——"

"Yes."

"She is to be brought up just as I have done. Should she love him, the old tragedy will come

again. She must never know love——” Then he yawned, and yawned, rousing slightly as they cut his sleeve to pieces in an attempt to reach the wound. He didn’t seem to care. He spoke only once again: “Hahn!”

“I am listening.”

The wind in the pine-trees, and the fox in the wood and the slobbering of the torches filled the silence.

“I am listening.”

“He is dead,” said Von der Goltz.

## CHAPTER XII

### WE RETURN HOME

WE left the forest, my father leaning on the arm of his second. One man with a torch preceded us, and lit us as we got into the carriage.

"A strange end to our visit, Major von der Goltz," said my father.

The Major bowed.

"I shall remain at the Hôtel des Hollandais in Frankfort for three days."

The Major bowed.

"Joubert!" said my father. And the carriage drove off; and, looking back, I saw Major von der Goltz and the jäger with the torch vanishing amidst the trees.

We passed through Homburg at four o'clock; and at six of a seraphic morning, spired Frankfort rose before us like a city in a fairy-tale, so beautiful, so vague, so ethereal one could not believe it a city of this solid earth.

We stayed three days at the Hôtel des Hollandais. Major von der Goltz called, and General Hahn. A paper was drawn up, I believe, signed by the seconds and my father, and

by the chief jäger. It was done as a matter of formality, for the duel was perfectly in order.

Then we started on our return home; and one evening, towards the end of September, we entered Paris and drew up at our house in the Avenue des Champs Elysées.

Though the Emperor and Empress were still away on their southern tour, the streets were gay—at least to my eyes. Oh, that Paris of the Second Empire—that lost city whose gaiety surrounds the beginning of my life, jewelled with gas-lamps or glittering in the sunlight! Whatever may have been its faults, its wickedness, its falsity, it knew at least the vitality and the charm of youth. Men knew how to laugh in those days, when the echoes of the Boulevard de Gand still were heard in the Boulevard des Italiens, when Carvalho was Director of the Opéra Comique, and Morny President of the Council.

“At last!” said my father, as we turned in at the gates and drew up at the doorway.

He had been depressed on the return journey—a depression caused, I believe, not in the least by the fact that he had slain his kinsman. The trouble at his heart was the blow. For a guest to strike his host in his own house was a breach of etiquette and good manners unpardonable in his eyes. Yet he had committed that crime.

However, with our entry into Paris this depression seemed to lift.

The major-domo came down the steps, and with his own august hands opened the door for

us, and let down the steps, and gave us welcome with a real and human smile on his magnificent white, fat, stolid face—that face of a perfect servant, expressionless as a cheese, which would doubtless remain just the same were he, constrained by stress of circumstances, to open the door of the drawing-room and announce: “The Last Trumpet has sounded, sir.”

In the great hall, softly lit and flower-scented, the footmen in their green-and-white livery stood in two gorgeous rows to give us welcome; and Jacko, the macaw, four feet from the crest of his wicked head to the tip of his tail-feathers, dressed also in the green-and-white livery of the house, screamed his sentiments on the matter. My father had a word for every one. It was always just so. This grand seigneur, who had made his way to fortune less with his sword than with his brilliant personality, would speak to the meanest servant familiarly, jocularly, yet never would he meet with disrespect. There was that about him which inspired fear as well as love, and he was served as few other men are served. Witness our return that night to a house as well in order as though we had come back from a trip to Compiègne instead of a two months’ journey to a foreign country.

He dismissed the servants with a word, and, with his hat on the back of his head, stood at the table where his letters were set out, tearing them open and flinging the unimportant ones on the floor.

Whilst he was so engaged, there came a ring

to the door, and the footman who answered it brought him a letter sealed with a great red seal, which he tore open and read.

"Aha!" muttered he. "De Morny wants to see me to-morrow. Wonder how he knew that I was back? But De Morny knows everything. Is the servant waiting, François?"

"No, sir; the servant has gone."

"Very well," said my father. Then to me: "Come, now; get your supper, and off to bed. François!"

I was led off grumbling.

Joubert tucked me into bed; and as I lay listening to the carriage-wheels from the Champs Elysées bearing people home from supper-party and theatre, the journey, the Schloss Lichtenberg, the mysterious pine-forest, the drums and tramping soldiers of Carlsruhe and Mayence, the blue Rhine—all rose before me as a picture. It was the First Act of my life, an Act tragic enough; and, as the curtain of sleep fell upon it, the glimmer of the jägers' torches still struggled through that veil, with the sound of the swords, the murmur of the wind in the pine-trees, and the far-off barking of the fox in the wood.

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## PART II



## CHAPTER XIII

### I FALL INTO DISGRACE

I WAS dreaming of the Countess Feliciani. She had changed all of a sudden, by the alchemy of dreamland, into little Carl. We were running together down the forest path in the woods of Lichtenberg, and the Stone Man was pursuing us, when a violent pull on my right leg awakened me, and Joubert and a burst of sunshine replaced dreamland and its shadows.

It was one of Joubert's pleasant ways of awakening a child from his sleep to catch him by the foot and nearly haul him out of bed.

Oh, the agony of having to get up, straight, without any preliminary stretching and yawning, to get up with that dead, blank tiredness of childhood hanging on one like a cloak—and get into a cold bath!

It was martial law with a vengeance. But there was no use in grumbling.

"Come, lazybones," said Joubert; "rouse yourself. Gone eight; and you are to go with the General at ten."

"Where to?" said I, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes.

"Ma foi! where to? Why, on a visit to M. le Duc de Morny."

"M. le Duc de Morny?"

"Oui."

I was in the bath now, and soapsuds checked my questions. Joubert used to wash me just as if I were a dog on the mornings that soapsuds were the order of the day—that is to say, only twice a week, every Wednesday and Saturday; for this old soldier was as full of fixed opinions as any nurse, and he believed that too much soap took the oil out of the skin and made children weak. You may be sure I did not combat his theory.

"Your best coat," said Joubert, as he took the article from the drawer, "and your best manners, if you please; for M. le Duc de Morny is the first gentleman in Paris, now that the Emperor is away. Now you are dressed, and—remember!"

You may be sure I was in a flutter, for the Duc de Morny was a personage I had never seen, and he loomed large even on my small horizon. From my childhood's recollections I believe that the Duc had far more dominance and power than poor old Louis Napoleon, whose craft lay chiefly in his face.

At a quarter to ten my father, in full general's uniform, very gorgeous, wearing his medals and the cross, appeared in the hall, where I was waiting for him. A closed carriage was at the door. We got in and started.

The Hôtel de Morny was situated on the Quai d'Orsay. It was a huge building, with gardens

running right down to the river. It was next to the Spanish Embassy, and had two entrances, one by the river, the other opening from the Rue de Lille.

We passed down the Rue de Lille, and then turned in at the gates, and by a short roadway to the great courtyard.

Other carriages were there—quite a number of them. Our carriage drew up at the steps, and we alighted.

As we left the chilly morning, and passed through the swing-glass doors held open for us by a powdered footman, it was like entering a greenhouse, so warm was the air, and so perfumed with flowers.

The Duc was far too astute a man to merge his personality in Government apartments. The Hôtel de Morny was his palace. There he held his court, receiving people in his bedchamber after the fashion of a king.

The salon was filled with people—all men, with one exception.

We were expected, it seems ; for the usher led us straight through the throng towards the tall double oak door that gave entrance to the Duc's room.

"Stay here, Patrick," said my father, and he indicated a chair close to the door. Then he vanished into the sanctum of the Minister, and I was left alone to contemplate the people around me.

They were arranged in little groups, talking together : fat men and thin men, several priests,

stout gentlemen with the red rosette of the Legion of Honour in their buttonholes, sun-dried gentlemen from Provence with fiery eyes and enormous moustaches, all talking, most of them gesticulating, and each awaiting his audience with the Minister.

Suddenly, through this crowd, which divided before her as the Red Sea divided before Pharaoh, straight towards me came the only female occupant of the room, an old lady at least seventy years of age, yet dressed like a girl of sixteen. She was so evidently making for me that I rose to meet her; and, before I could resent the outrage, a lace frill tickled my chin, a perfume of stephanotis half smothered me, and a pair of thin lips smacked against my cheek.

She had kissed me. Scarlet to the eyes, conscious that I was observed by all, not knowing exactly what I did, I did a very unmannerly thing—wiped my cheek with the back of my hand as if to wipe the kiss away.

"I knew you at once," said the old lady, who was none other than the Countess Wagner de Pons, reader to the Empress. "You are the dear General's little boy, of whom I have heard so much—le petit Patrique. And you have been away, and you have just returned. Mon Dieu! the likeness is most speaking. Now, look you, Patrique, over there on that fauteuil. That is the little Comte de Coigny, whom I have brought this morning to make his bow to M. le Duc de Morny. Come with me, and I will introduce you to him. He is of the haute

noblesse, a child of the highest understanding, très comme il faut."

I glanced at the little Comte de Coigny (of a family in no way connected with the ducal house of that name). He was a tallow-faced, heavy-looking individual, bigger than me, and older. He might have been eleven. He was dressed like a little man, kid gloves and all; and he was looking at me with a dull and sinister expression that spoke neither of a high understanding nor a good heart.

Before I could move towards him, led by the Countess Wagner de Pons, the door of De Morny's room opened, and my father's voice said, "Patrick."

Leaving the old lady, I came.

I found myself in a huge room, with long windows giving a view of the garden and the river. It was, in fact, a salon set out with fauteuils and couches. A bed in one corner, raised on a low platform, struck me by its incongruity. How any one could choose to sleep in such a vast and gorgeous salon astonished my childish mind. But I had little time to think of these things, for the man standing with his back to the fireplace absorbed all my attention.

He was above the middle height, with a bald, dome-like forehead, a strong face, and wearing a moustache and imperial. He was dressed like any other gentleman, but there was that about him—a self-contained vigour, a calmness of manner, and a grace—that stamped him at once on the memory as a person never to be forgotten.

"This is my little son," said my father.



I saluted, and the great man bowed.

Then I was questioned about the affair at Lichtenberg, for it seems that the matter had made more than a stir at the Prussian Court. Questions were being asked; and there was that eruption of evil talk, that dicrotic rebound of excitement, which, after every social tragedy, is sure to follow the first wave.

"And now," said my father, when I had finished my evidence, "run off and play till I am ready for you."

Play! With whom did he expect me to play? With the fat Deputies, the opulent bankers, the sun-dried gentlemen from the South who thronged the ante-chamber?

The Countess Wagner de Pons answered the question. This old lady, whose eccentricity and love of gossip had made her wait with her charge in the ante-room, instead of having her name announced to the Duchesse de Morny, as any other lady of rank would have done, was deep in conversation with a tall, dignified gentleman, deep in scandal, no doubt; for, when she saw me, she got rid of me at once by introducing me to the little Comte de Coigny. "And now," said she, as if echoing my father's words, "run off and play, both of you, in the garden."

A footman in the blue-and-gold livery of the Duc led us down an iron staircase to the gravelled walk upon which the lower windows opened, and left us there.

Play! There was less play in the stiff and starched little Comte de Coigny, that child of

haute noblesse, très comme il faut, than in the elephant of the Jardin des Plantes, or any of the fat Deputies in M. de Morny's ante-room. But there was much more dignity, of a heavy sort.

We took the path towards the river.

"And you," said he, breaking the silence as we walked along. "Where have you come from?"

"Germany," I replied.

"I thought so," said he.

He was a schoolboy of the Bourdaloue College, but all the planing and polishing of the Jesuit fathers had not improved his manners, it seems. The tone of his reply was an insult in itself, and I took it as such, and held my tongue and waited.

We walked right down to the balustrade overlooking the Seine. De Coigny mounted, sat on the balustrade, whistled, and as he sat kicking his heels he cast his eyes up and down me from crown to toe.

I stood before him with the seeming humility of the younger child; but my blood was boiling, and my knuckles itched at the sight of his flabby, pasty face.

Some trees sheltered us from the house, and my gentleman from the Bourdaloue College took a box of Spanish cigaritos from his pocket and a matchbox adorned with the picture of a ballet-girl.

He put a cigarito between his thick lips, lit it, blew a puff of smoke, and held out the box to me to have one. Fired with the manliness of the affair, I put out my hand, and received, instead of a cigarito, a rap on the knuckles with his cane.

"That's to teach you not to smoke," said Mentor. "How old are you?"

"Nine," replied I. The blow hurt; but I put my hand in my pocket, and I think neither my voice nor my face betrayed my feelings.

"Nine. And what part of Germany do you come from?"

"I was staying at the Castle of Lichtenberg."

"Aha!" said the gentleman on the balustrade. "And who, may I ask, did we entertain at our Castle of Lichtenberg?"

"King William of Prussia," I replied out of my childish vanity, "the Count Feliciani, the great banker, and——"

"Mr. What's-your-name," said my tormentor, "you are a liar. The Count Feliciani, the great banker, as you call him, is in prison——"

"How! What?" I cried.

"Oh," said he, with the air of an old boulevardier, "it is all over Paris. Caught embezzling State funds; arrested at the railway station. A nice acquaintance, truly, to boast of!"

"Oh, Eloise!" I cried, my whole heart going out to the unhappy family; for, though I did not know what embezzling funds meant, prison was plain enough to my understanding.

"Oh, Eloise!" mimicked the other, throwing his cigarette-end away, slipping down from the balustrade, and adjusting his waistcoat preparatory to returning to the house. "Oh, Eloise! Come on, cochon. I have an appointment with M. le Duc de Morny."

"Allons!" And again he hit me with the cane, this time over the right shoulder.

I struck him first in the wind, a foul blow, which I have never yet regretted; and, as he doubled up, I struck him again, by good fortune, just at the root of the nose.

The effect was magical, and I stood in consternation looking at my handiwork, for instantly his two eyes became black and his nose streamed gore.

He lay for a moment where he had fallen; then he scrambled on all fours, got on his feet, and running, streaming blood, and bellowing at the same time, without his hat, without his dandy cane, without his cigarette-box, which he had left on the balustrade, he made for the house, this enfant très comme il faut, and of the highest intelligence; a nice figure, indeed, for presentation to the Duc de Morny!

It was a veritable débâcle. He knew how to run, that child of the haute noblesse; and, when I arrived in the ante-room, he was already roaring his tale out into the Countess Wagner de Pons' brocaded skirts, for he was clinging to her like a child of five, whilst the fat Deputies, the Jew bankers, and other illuminati stood round in a circle, excited as schoolboys. A nice scene, truly, to take place in a Minister of State's salon.

"He struck me in the stomach! he struck me on the head! he kicked me!" roared the little Comte de Coigny. "Keep him away! Keep him away! Here he is! Here he is!"

The Countess de Pons screamed. A row of

long-drawn faces turned on me, and the bankers and Deputies, the priests, and the Southern delegates made a hedge to protect the stricken one, and cooshed at me as if I were a cat. Cries of "Ah! polisson! Mauvais enfant! Regardez! Regardez!" filled the room, till the hubbub suddenly ceased at a stern voice that said, "Patrick!"

It was my father, whose interview with De Morny was over. He stood at the open door, and I saw the Duc, who had peeped out, and whose quick intelligence had taken in the whole affair in a flash, vanishing with a smile on his face.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RUINED ONES

"Go home!" said my father, putting me into the carriage. "I will return on foot. You have disgraced yourself; you have disgraced me. Hand yourself over to Joubert. You are to be a prisoner under lock and key until I devise some punishment to meet your case." Then, to the coachman: "Home, Lubin!" He clapped the door on me, and I was driven off, with his speech ringing in my ears, a speech which I believe was meant as much for the gallery as for me.

This was my first encounter with the Comte de Coigny, and I believe I had the worst of it. But I was not thinking of De Coigny—I was thinking of little Eloise, of the Countess whose beauty haunted me, and of the Count, that noble-looking gentleman, now in prison.

Eloise had told me that their house in Paris was situated in the Faubourg St. Germain, and, as we turned out of the Rue de Lille, an inspiration came to me. I pulled the check-string, the carriage stopped, and I put my head out of the window.

"Lubin!"

"Well?"

"Drive me to the Faubourg St. Germain."

"Likely, indeed! and lose my place. Ma foi!—Faubourg St. Germain!"

"Lubin! I have a napoleon in my pocket, and I'll give it you if——"

But the carriage drove on.

I sank back on the cushions, but I was not defeated yet. There was a block of traffic in the Rue du Trône. I put my hand out, opened the door on the left side, and the next moment I was standing upon the pavement, and the heavy old carriage was driving on, with the door swinging open.

Then I ran, ran till I was out of breath, and in a broad street full of shops.

A barrel-organ was playing in the sunshine; a herd of she-asses was trotting along, followed by an Auvergnat in sabots; and a fiacre plying for hire was approaching on the opposite side of the way.

I hailed the driver, and told him to take me to the Faubourg St. Germain.

"Where to in the Faubourg St. Germain?" asked the man.

"I want to go to the Count Feliciani's," I replied.

"The Hôtel Feliciani?"

"Yes."

"Get in."

He drove off. He knew the Hôtel Feliciani, did this driver. All Paris was ringing with the disgrace of the man who, from his throne in the

kingdom of finance, had fallen to the gutter, involving a thousand others in his ruin. But I knew nothing of this; and from the man's unconcerned manner I began to hope that De Coigny had told me a lie.

The fiacre drove in through the gates of a huge hotel in the Faubourg St. Germain. The courtyard was crowded with people—and such people! Jews, porters, female furniture-dealers with heavy earrings, silken skirts, and ungloved, unwashed hands, all the sharks that ruin attracts; and in the portico, on the steps, on the very gravel of the drive, furniture, crystal chandeliers, tables, mirrors, lying like the débris left by the wave of misfortune.

It was as if one were looking at a lee shore the morning after the wreck of some palatial ship: cabin-furniture, stores, the sailor's sea-chest, and the passenger's baggage tossed up on the sands in horrible incongruity, and speaking louder than a thousand trumpets of the fury of the storm.

There was a sale in progress at the Hôtel Feliciani. I knew nothing of sales, I knew nothing of finance, speculation, or commercial ruin; but I knew that what I saw was disaster.

Getting out of the cabriolet, and telling the driver to wait for me, I went up the steps and mixed with the throng in the hall. I wanted to find the Felicianis, and some instinct told me they were not here; also, that it was useless to ask any of these people their whereabouts. I looked about me for some one in authority; and, as I



looked, a voice from the large salon adjoining the hall came :

"Thirty thousand francs! Thirty thousand francs! Any advance on thirty thousand francs? Gone!" Then followed the blow of a little hammer.

They were selling the pictures. I turned to the doorway of the great salon and squeezed my way in. The place was filled with people—all Paris was there. Men who had shaken the Count Feliciani by the hand, women who had kissed the Countess on the cheek, men and women of the highest nobility, of the greatest intelligence—*très comme il faut*, to use the words of the old fool in De Morny's ante-chamber—were here, battenning on the sight, and trying to snatch bargains from the ruin of their one-time friends. The Felicianis, as I afterwards learned, all but beggared, had been cast adrift, mother and daughter, by society ; cast out like lepers from the pure precincts of the Court circle and the buckramed salons of the Royalist clique.

M. Hamard, the auctioneer, on his estrade, before his desk, a man in steel spectacles, the living image of the late unlamented Procurator of the Holy Synod, was clearing his throat before offering the next lot, a Gerard Dow, eighteen inches by twelve.

As the bidding leaped up by a thousand francs at a time, I edged my way through the throng closer and closer to the auctioneer, treading on dainty toes, wedging myself in between whispering acquaintances, regardless of grumbles and

muttered imprecations, till I was right beside the estrade and within plucking distance of the auctioneer's coat.

"Sixty-five thousand francs!" cried M. Hamard. "This priceless Gerard Dow—sixty-five thousand francs. Any advance on sixty-five thousand francs? Gone! Well, what is it, little boy?"

"Please," said I, "can you tell me where I can find the Countess Feliciani?"

A dead silence took the room, for my nervousness had made me speak louder than I intended. People looked at one another; an awkward silence it must have been following the voice of the *enfant terrible* flinging the name of the woman they had cast out and deserted into the face of these worldlings who had come to examine her effects and snatch bargains from her ruin.

M. Hamard, aghast, stared down at me through his spectacles.

"You—— Who are you?" said he.

"I am her friend. My name is Patrick Mahon. My father is General Count Mahon, and I wish to see the Countess Feliciani."

M. Hamard seized a pen from the desk, scribbled some words on a piece of paper, and handed it to me.

"Go," he said. "That is the address. You are interrupting the sale."

Then, with the paper in my hand, I came back through the crush without difficulty—for the crowd made a lane for me down which I walked—paper in hand, a child of nine, the last and

only friend of the once great and powerful Felicianis.

I read the address on the piece of paper to the driver of the fiacre.

"Ma foi!" said he, "but that is a long way from here."

"Drive me there," said I.

"Yes; that is all very well, but how about my fare?"

I showed him my napoleon, got into the vehicle, and we drove off.

It was indeed a long way from there. We retook the route by which we had come; we drove through the broad streets, through the great boulevards, and then we plunged into a quarter of the city where the streets were shrunk and mean, where the people were in keeping with the streets, and the light of the bright October day seemed dull as the light of December.

At the Hôtel de Mayence in the Rue Ancelot we drew up. It was a respectable, third-rate hotel. A black cat was crouched in the doorway, watching the street with imperturbable yellow eyes, and a waiter with a stained serviette in his hand made his appearance at the sound of the vehicle drawing up.

Yes; Madame Feliciani was in: he would go up and see whether she could receive visitors. I waited, trying to make friends with the sphinx-like cat; then I was shown upstairs, and into a shabby sitting-room overlooking the street.

By the window, stitching at a child's small garment, sat an old lady with snow-white hair. It was the Countess Feliciani.

It was as if I had seen by some horrible enchantment a woman of thirty-five, happy and beautiful, surrounded by the wealth and luxury of life, suddenly withered, touched by the wand of some malevolent fairy and transformed into a woman old and poor.

It was my first lesson in the realities of life, this fairy-tale, which, for hidden terror, put Vogel's story of the old woman who made the whistles completely in the shade.

Next moment I was at her knee, blubbering, with my nose rubbing the bombazine of her black skirt—for she was in mourning—and next moment little Eloise was in the room, looking just the same as ever, and I was being comforted as if all the misfortune were mine; and Madame Feliciani—for so she chose to be styled—was smiling for the first time, I am sure, since the disaster. A late *déjeuner* was brought in, and I was given a place at the table. It is all misty and strange in my mind. A few things of absolute unimportance stand out—the coat of the waiter, shiny at the elbows; the hotel dog that came in for scraps; the knives and forks, worn and second-rate—but of what we said to each other I remember nothing.

"And you will come and see us?" said I, as I took my departure.

"Some day," replied the Countess, with a smile, the significance of which I now under-

stand, as I understand the horrible mockery of my innocent invitation.

Eloise ran down to see me off; and the last I saw of her was a small figure standing at the door of the hotel, and holding in its arms the black cat with the imperturbable yellow eyes.

When we arrived at the Champs Elysées I was so frightened with my doings that I gave the driver the whole napoleon without waiting for change, and then I went to meet my doom like a man, and confessed the whole business to my father.

The sentence was expulsion from Paris to the pavilion in the grounds of the Château de Saluce, whither, accordingly, I was transported next day with Joubert for a gaoler.

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## CHAPTER XV

### THE PAVILION OF SALUCE

SINCE my mother's death, my father had not lived in the château. He was too grand to let it, so it was placed in the hands of a caretaker. It was a gloomy house, dating from 1572, but the pavilion was the pleasantest place in the world. It was situated in the woods of the château, woods adjoining the forest of Sénart. It had six rooms, and was surrounded by a deep moat. A drawbridge gave access to it; and by touching a lever the drawbridge would rise, and you were as completely isolated from the world as though you were surrounded by a wall of iron.

The water in the moat, fed by some unknown source, was very dark and still and deep, reflecting with photographic perfection the tree-tops of the wood and the fern-fronds of the bank. The water never varied in height, and, a strange thing, was rarely, even in the severest weather, covered with ice. It had a gloomy and secret look.

"Joubert," I remember saying once, as I looked over the rail of the drawbridge at the reflections on the oily surface below, "has it ever drowned a man?"

"Which?" asked Joubert.

"The water."

That was the feeling with which it inspired me, and I never lingered on the bridge when I was alone. And I was often alone now, for Joubert, having extracted my parole d'honneur to be of good behaviour and not get into mischief or bolt back to Paris, spent most of his time at the château, where the caretaker had a pretty daughter, or at the cabaret at Etiolles ; Lisette, the old woman who did our cooking and made our beds, being deputed deputy-gaoler.

The weather had the feeling of early spring, though in the forest, half stricken by autumn, the leaves were falling—falling to every touch of the wind. Where the forest of Sénart began, and the woods of the Château de Saluce ended, the frontier was marked by a thin line of wire easy for a child to slip under. Then one felt free, free as the cock pheasant whose corkscrew-sounding voice echoed from the liquid twilight of the drives, free as the wind in the tree-tops. The great pine-forest of Lichtenberg had a voice. You would hear the wind rising and passing over its leagues of perfumed branches, and dying away, and rising and dying away—ever the same voice filling and deserting the same vast silence. But here, in the forest of Sénart, the tongue of the beech spoke a different language to that of the fir and the larch. There were open spaces, swathes of sunshine, forest pools like lost sapphires, where the bulrushes painted their forms on the water-surface, blue with the reflection of the autumn sky.

These woods, whose echoes had once answered to the hunting-horn of *Le Roi Soleil*, were haunted, but not by the ghost of Pan. Rousseau had once botanised in them, and M. de Jussieu, in his coat of ribbed Indian satin, his lilac silk vest, and white silk stockings of extraordinary fineness, had here filled his herbal with the *Vicris hieracioides* and the *Cerastium aquaticum* so dear to his herboristic heart. Pompadour had wandered where the rabbits played now; and the glades, shot through with sunlight and draped in the muslin of the morning mist, were the backgrounds beloved of Fragonard for his wreaths of flying drapery, his *fêtes champêtres*, and his sylvan scenes.

The forest-keepers all wore a state uniform. Fauchard, the one who lived nearest to us, an old soldier and a crony of Joubert's, would take me with him whilst he set his traps; and there were gipsies that haunted the clearings—real children of Egypt these, lineal descendants of Hennequin Dandèche and Clopin Trouillefou.

On the evening of our sixth day at the pavilion a visitor arrived. It was my father. He had left his carriage in the road at the gates of the château, and had come to the pavilion on foot.

I was at supper when he arrived. He ordered another plate, and a bottle of wine; he was gay, excited, his eyes were brilliant, and he seemed quite to have forgotten my escapades in Paris, for he never referred to them. He had only come for an hour, to see how I was getting on, so he said; but he stayed three, for after supper he



called Joubert, and they both went out into the night.

These two old soldiers must have had something very important to say to one another, for they were gone an hour or more. When they returned, my father beckoned me to him and kissed me, and bade me good night; then, as if something had suddenly occurred to him, he said to Joubert, "Patrick can come down to the road and see me off. Come, both of you, and bring a lantern."

Joubert lit a lantern. The night was black as black velvet, and the lantern only showed Joubert's legging-clad legs as he marched before us down the gravel of the drive.

The carriage was standing in the road. My father kissed me, got in, and drove away.

Just as the vehicle moved off, he looked out of the window, and the light of the lantern which Joubert was holding up struck his face. What a reckless, daring, jolly face it was, that face I was destined never to see again!

"What did father want to say to you, Joubert?" I asked as we returned to the pavilion.

"What did he want to say?" cried Joubert, whose temper seemed sharper than usual. "Why, that the price of cabbages has gone up. What else would he have come to say to me at this hour of the night? Mordieu! If I could be there!"

"Where, Joubert?"

But Joubert did not reply.

Next morning the fine weather still held, and I was up at dawn. It was no trouble to get

up early when one lived in the pavilion. The birds wakened one; and, then, the forest!

In the very early morning, the forest, like the sea, is full of tender lights. Shadows and trees are equally unsubstantial, the rides are wreathed in vague mists, the last star has not quite faded from the sky, and the voice of the thrush comes from the glens as in the story of Vitigab, crying: "Deep—down deep—there somewhere in the darkness I see a ray of light." The hollow tapping of the woodpecker comes from the beech glades, whilst the rabbits shake the dew from their fur, and the rustle of the stoat comes from the ferns; a nut falls, and, looking up, you see against the sky, where the tree-tops are waving in the palest sapphire air, the squirrel, the sweetest of all wood things.

You observe one another and he is gone, and the wind draws up from leagues away like the rustling of a silken skirt, till, suddenly, the whole forest draws breath. You can hear it waking from its slumber just as at dusk you can hear it falling to sleep; for the forest is a living thing, a thing that breathes and speaks and has its dreams.

I was out early this morning, for I was going to breakfast with Fauchard. I passed the glades where the rabbits were sporting, chasing each other in circles smoothly and for all the world like toy rabbits on wheels and driven by clock-work. I passed the pools where the bulrushes stood up out of the mist, and nothing spoke of water save the splash of the frog, or the ripple of the water-rat swimming.

Fauchard was waiting for me. We had breakfast—a simple enough repast, consisting of coffee, biscuits, and cheese—and then we started off to visit the traps and see what they had caught.

When Fauchard had collected his harvest of stoats and moles, killed two snakes, and shot a marauding cat, it was late morning; the sun was well over the tree-tops, and it was time for me to return home.

“Take that path,” said the ranger. “Turn neither to the right nor the left, and it will bring you straight as an omnibus to the pavilion.”

I bade him good morning, and, taking the path indicated, I set off. It was not a drive; in fact, it was so narrow in parts that the hawthorn-bushes growing in this part of the wood nearly met; the fern in places nearly blocked the way. It was warm, and very silent.

When I paused now and then to listen, I could hear nothing except the buzzing of wasps and flies.

I had turned past a clump of elders, when, before me, I caught a glimpse of some one going in the same direction as myself—a boy of my own age, to judge from his height; but I could not see what he was dressed in, or whether he was a gipsy or a woodranger's child, for he was always just ahead of my sight at the turnings, glimpsed for a moment and then gone. I halloed to him to stop, for his company would have been very acceptable in that lonely place, but he made no reply. I ran, and, pausing, out of breath, I heard his footsteps running, too; then they

ceased, as though he were waiting for me. It was like a game of hide-and-seek, and I laughed.

I walked softly and as quickly as I could, hoping to surprise him. Then, at the next turning, I saw him. He was amidst the bushes on the right; his head just peeped over the tops of them, and his hair, black as night, reminded me of the hair of little Carl.

Leaving the path I ran through the bushes towards him.

Then I remembered nothing more.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE VICOMTE

I HAD fallen into a disused gravel-pit, treacherously hidden by the bushes, so they told me afterwards. When I recovered from my stunned condition, my cries for help had attracted the attention of Fauchard's eldest son, who, fortunately, had been passing. I do not remember calling for help; I remember nothing distinctly till I found myself on my bed, and old Dr. Perichaud of Etiolles bending over me. Then I became keenly alive to my position, for my right thigh was broken in two places, and the doctor was setting it. When the thing was over, the doctor retired with Joubert to the next room, and there they talked. When will people learn that the sick have ears to hear with, and a sense of hearing doubly acute?

This conversation came to my ears. The speakers spoke in a muted voice, it is true, but this only made the matter worse.

"You have sent for the General, you say?"

"Oui, monsieur. A man on horseback has

started to fetch him. He will be here in an hour, unless——”

“Unless?”

“Monsieur does not know. The General has an affair of honour on hand. This morning, in the Bois de Boulogne, he was to meet Baron Imhoff.”

“Aha!” said Perichaud, with appreciation. He was an old army surgeon, who had tasted smoke, and seen men carved with other things than scalpels. He was also a gossip, as most old army men are. “Aha! And what was the cause of the affair. Do you know?”

“Oh, mon Dieu!” said Joubert, “it was all that cursed business at the Schloss Lichtenberg, of which every one is speaking. Baron Imhoff was cousin”—mark the “was”—“of the Baron von Lichtenberg. Baron Imhoff picked a quarrel at the Grand Club yesterday with the General. That’s all. It is a bad affair.”

“And the Lichtenberg affair—the cause of all this?” said Perichaud.

“Ah, that beats the Moscow campaign,” said Joubert, “for blackness and treachery. Mark you: this is between ourselves. You will never breathe a word of it to any one?”

“No, no; not a word!”

“Well, the Baron Carl von Lichtenberg was mad.”

“Mad?”

“Mad. What else can you call a man who brings his little daughter up as a boy?”

“A boy?”

"It is true. He fancied she was some old dead-and-gone Lichtenberg returned, and that she was doomed to be killed by the child in there with the broken leg, whom he thought was some old dead-and-gone Saluce returned. Then—— Listen to me; and I trust monsieur's honour never to let these words go further. He, or at least one of his damned jägers, tried to smother the child. The night before, they tried to stab him—as he lay asleep in bed—with my couteau de chasse, and would have done it only the Blessed Virgin interposed."

"Great Heaven!" said the old doctor.

"Oh, yes," said Joubert; "that's the story. I saw it all with my own eyes, or I wouldn't believe my own tongue with my own ears. And now, monsieur, what do you think of him?"

"Of whom?" said Perichaud.

"Of the child. Is there danger?"

"Not a bit; but he'll be lame for life."

"Lame for life!"

"The femur is broken in two places, and splintered. The right leg will be two inches shorter than the left. All the surgeons in Paris could not do him any good."

"Then he will be useless for the army!" said Joubert. And I could hear the catching of his breath.

"He will never see service," replied Perichaud.

A loud smash of crockery came as a reply to the doctor's pronouncement. It was Joubert kicking a great Japanese jar on to the floor.

As for me, I had heard the death-sentence of my hopes. I would never wear a sword or lead a company into action. I would be a thing with a lame leg—a cripple. Fortunately, an opiate which the doctor had given me began to take effect. It did not make me sleepy, but it dulled my thoughts—some of them; others it made more bright. I lay listening to the doctor departing, and watching the red sunset which was dyeing Etioilles, and the woods, and the walls of my bedroom.

I was wondering about the accident and how it had come about, for the pain and shock had debarred me from questioning Joubert; and I knew nothing of the gravel-pit or of my fall into it.

Then Joubert's words came into my head about Lichtenberg, and the duel the General had fought that morning with Baron Imhoff. I did not feel in the least uneasy about my father, and I was picturing the duel in the woods of Lichtenberg, when a sound through the open window came to my ears.

It was a carriage rapidly driving up the distant avenue to the château.

It was my father, I felt sure. A long time passed, and then I heard steps on the drawbridge; voices sounded from 'below. Then came a step on the stairs; my door opened, and a gentleman stood framed in the doorway.

I shall never forget my first sight of the Vicomte Armand de Chatellan, my father's cousin on the Saluces' side, and my future guardian.

I had never seen him before. He was not,



indeed, a sight to come often in a child's way, this flower of the boulevards, seventy if a day, scented, exquisite, with a large, impassive, evenly coloured red face, the face of a Roman consul, in which were set the blue eyes of a good-tempered child.

This great gentleman, who left the pavements of Paris only once a year for a three weeks' visit to his estates in Auvergne, had travelled express from Paris to tell a child that its father was lying dead, shot through the heart by the Baron Imhoff. And this is how he did it.

He made a kindly little bow to me, and indicated Joubert to place a chair by the bedside.

"And how are we this evening?" asked he, taking my wrist as a physician might have done to feel my pulse.

I did not know who he was. I had vague suspicions that he was another doctor. Never for a moment did I dream he was the bearer of evil tidings. I said I was better—that old reply of the sick child—and he talked on various subjects: the airiness of the room, the beauty of the woods, and so forth. Then, to Joubert: "Distinctly feverish. Must not be disturbed to-night. Ah, yes, in the morning; that will be different. And no more tumbling into gravel-pits," finished this astute old gentleman as he glanced back at me before leaving the room.

Then the opiate closed its lid on me, and I did not even hear the departure of the Vicomte Armand de Chatellan, my future guardian, who

shuffled out of the unpleasant business of grieving my heart on the same evening that he shuffled into my life, he and his grand, queer, quaint, and sometimes despicable personality, perfumed with vervain and the cigars of the Café de Paris.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A DÉJEUNER AT THE CAFÉ DE PARIS

THE death of my father cast me into an entirely new life. Any one less fitting than the Vicomte Armand de Chatellan to be the guardian of a child of nine it would be hard to imagine at first sight. But my father was no fool.

This gorgeous old night-moth of the Second Empire, this frequenter of Tortoni's and the Café de Paris—always hard up, with an income of two hundred thousand francs a year—was a man of rigid honour in his way.

Left sole and irresponsible guardian of me and my money, he shuffled out of his difficulties and bothers by placing the latter in the funds and the former in the Bourdaloue College—that same college of the Jesuit fathers where the Comte de Coigny was receiving his education.

Here nine years of my life were spent—nine dull but not unhappy years. Lame and unfit for the army, completely cut off from the only profession fit for a gentleman—to use the Vicomte's expression—I saw the others go off into the world, and I would not have felt it so bitterly had not De Coigny been amongst

them. He was my natural enemy. All the time we spent together at the Bourdaloue, we scarcely spoke a word one to the other. Speechless enmity: there can scarcely be a worse condition between boys or men.

Once a month or so the Vicomte came to see me. Joubert came often. He was installed as caretaker in the Château de Saluce, and he would bring me presents of game and plovers' eggs, huge Jargonelle pears from the orchard, and cakes baked by Fauchard's wife.

During the first few months at the college, I had got leave from the Father Superior to visit the Felicianis. A young priest accompanied me. But the Felicianis were not at the Hôtel de Mayence; no one knew anything about them; the hotel itself had changed hands after the fashion of these small hotels, the short chapters of whose histories have for heading "Bankruptcy."

Then I forgot.

Little by little the beautiful Countess and the sprightly Eloise faded from my mind—never entirely, but they passed to the region of ghosts, the limbo of things half remembered.

I was not a diligent student—good for nothing much except drawing. I was an artist born, I believe, and had the artistic temperament, which takes a delight in all things brilliant and beautiful, and tuneful and grand, and holds in abhorrence all things dull and most things useful. Smuggled novels and the poems of De Musset were the literature of my heart. D'Artagnan and

Bussy were my heroes, and Esmeralda, that brilliant and gemlike creation, was my mistress.

Life is a love-story, a story that Nature alone can teach you to read. And what are the poets and the great writers of prose but Nature's priests, who repeat her litanies? Yet love-stories were banned at the Bourdaloue, and Dumas was accounted a child of Satan. Which statement is a preface to the comedy of my eighteenth birthday, or, in other words, the twentieth of May 1869.

I was to leave school on that day. The Vicomte de Chatellan was to entertain me at déjeuner. I was to have rooms at his house in the Place Vendôme; I was, in fact, to burst my sheath and become a dragon-fly. I was to have an allowance of four hundred a year, to teach me, as the Vicomte said, the value of money. Joubert was to be unearthed from the Château de Saluce, and constituted my valet. Blacquerie, the Vicomte's tailor, and Champardy, his boot-maker, had already called and taken the measurements for my new wardrobe. I can tell you I was elated; and no débutante ever looked forward more eagerly to the day of her début than I to the twentieth of May.

At ten o'clock the Vicomte called for me. He was received in the salon by the principal and two of the fathers. They liked me, these men, and I liked them; and though I had imbibed Jesuitism as little as a rock imbibes the sea-water in which it is immersed, I respected Père Hyacinthe, and I loved, without any reserve,

Father Ambrose, a bull-necked Arlesian, who, incapable of hurting a fly in practice, burnt heretics in theory, for ever, and for ever, and for ever in hell.

As we got into the Vicomte's carriage, this same Father Ambrose came running out, and, just as we drove off, popped into my hand a little green-covered book on the seven deadly sins.

"What's that?" asked the Vicomte, as I turned the leaves.

I showed it to him.

"Pshaw!" said he, and flung it out of the window.

"All that stuff you have learned," said this worthy man, "is excellent for children; but when we become men we put away childish things, as M. de Voltaire or some other scoundrel of a philosopher, I think it was, once remarked. Mark you, I say nothing against religion. Religion is a most excellent institution; but in the world, my dear Patrique, we are brought face to face with men. Religion is a fixed institution; and the nones, or complines, whatever you call it that they say to-day, were what they said two hundred years ago. But men are very shifty, and, as a matter of fact, rogues. It is very easy to be a saint in the College Bourdaloue; but it is very difficult to be a gentleman in the Boulevard des Italiens, especially in this bourgeois age" (he was a Royalist, with one foot in the Tuileries and the other in the Faubourg St. Germain), "when we have a what-do-you-call-it as President

of the Council and a thingumbob on the throne of France."

So he went on as he sat, erect as a man of thirty, gazing at the passing streets with those blue tranquil eyes of a child, out of which youth still looked; and turning to me the pro-consular profile of which he was secretly so proud, and which was the thing, I believe, up to which this strange old gentleman lived.

To live up to your profile is not a bad rule of life, if you have a face like that possessed by the Vicomte Armand de Chatellan.

When we drew up at the Place Vendôme, I put my hand to open the door, and received my first lesson in the convenances from the Vicomte, who laid his gloved hand on my arm without a word. The footman opened the door, and the grand old gentleman descended. M. le Vicomte did not get out of a carriage—he descended. And with what a grace! He waited courteously for me on the pavement; and then, with a little wave of his clouded cane, shepherded me into the house.

At the door, Beril, the Vicomte's personal servant, a man older than his master, received us; and Joubert was in the hall with my luggage.

"And now," said the Vicomte, when I had been shown my suite of rooms—and very sumptuous they were—"déjeuner."

We got into the carriage which was waiting, the footman closed the door, and we started for the Café de Paris.

Fourteen people were invited to the repast, besides myself. It took place in the Amber

Room overlooking the boulevard ; and six of the guests were ladies—very great ladies—duchesses, in my simple eyes. Had I known more of breakfast-parties and the world, I might have wondered at the disposition of the guests ; for the Duc d'Harmonville, an old gentleman with a white imperial and the exact expression of a billy-goat, sat between two of the duchesses ; and the rest of the female illuminati sat, three of them altogether in one cluster, and the sixth on the right of my guardian.

There was Péliссon of the *Moniteur*, the only Press man present ; Carvalho of the Opéra Comique ; the Duc de Cadore ; Prince Metternich, with his long Dundreary whiskers now slightly streaked with grey ; and, as for the rest, I did not catch their names, and I have all but forgotten their faces.

One thing especially struck me in the male guests. With the exception of Péliссon and Prince Metternich, their manner and their voices recalled something or somebody to my mind, yet what thing or person I could not remember, till Memory suddenly chalked on the vacant space before her :

De Morny.

The languid air, the half-lisp, the attentive inattention of manner, all were here, the very voice.

What a triumph ! De Morny had been dead and buried nearly four years, yet his reflection still lingered on the faces of these apes ; his voice had been silent since the orations and muffled



drums of that dramatic funeral, which outvied in splendour the funeral of Germanicus, and which I had witnessed in company with Père Hyacinthe and the pupils of the Bourdaloue; yet his voice still was heard in the supper-rooms of Paris, discussing the length of ballet-girls' skirts and the scandals of Plon-Plon.

With the fish the conversation became more general, and with the iced champagne—served from jeroboams—decency and the ghost of De Morny rose to take their departure.

It was strange to me, a water-drinker, and therefore an observer of the others, to see these men forgetting themselves, to see languid faces become flushed, to hear soft voices become harsh, tongues become ribald; to watch brutal lines asserting themselves and countenances unveiled by alcohol. And it was surpassingly funny to see the evanescence of the De Morny air.

At the head of the table, a tint more ruddy than usual, sat my guardian, enjoying it all.

We had all, like the lunatic guests at the dinner-party of Dr. Tar and Professor Feather, sat down to table apparently staid and respectable people, and by degrees, just as lunacy set off the Doctor's guests crowing like cocks and braying like asses, the spirit of the Second Empire in its last and rottenest stages invaded the Amber Room of the Café de Paris. Furious discussions, fumes of spilt wines, wreaths of cigar and cigarette smoke, the cracked and cruel laughter of women, filled the air.

. . . . .

And in the midst of it all sat my guardian, in his element, enjoying the enjoyment of his guests, paternal, and with those childish blue eyes through which youth looked so frankly, and that voice, so courtly and well modulated, infecting the others with I know not what. I only know that from him seemed to emanate the diablerie of the party. Sober as myself, self-contained and courtly, he seemed like the negative pole of some diabolical battery, of which the others were the positive.

In the midst of the smoke and chatter he rose, and with a glass of champagne between two fingers as a lady holds a lily, he proposed my health and success in the world of Paris; and I rose and said something—foolish, no doubt, but it did not matter, for Amy Féraud, of the Théâtre Montparnasse, whilst she pelted Prince Metternich with bonbons, lost her balance, fell smash on her back, pulling the tablecloth with her, and in the confusion I sat down.

Half an hour later, arm-in-arm with my guardian I was taking a digestion walk down the Boulevard des Italiens. The old gentleman was pleased, very pleased, for it seems I had conducted myself in a modest and becoming manner, and the few words I had said had been well said; and you might have thought that he was discussing a children's party as he strolled by my side, saluting every person of distinction that he met, and being saluted in return.

I really believe that this man was as innocent at heart as any child, yet he was an old roué, a

duellist, a gambler, all that a bad man could be. Yet, though always hard up, he had jealously guarded my patrimony, which he could have plundered if he had chosen with impunity. His charity was boundless if you tapped it; and, though he spoke of women in a light way, *I never heard him speak a bad word of any man.* And he loved animals, stopping to stroke a cat in the Rue de Rivoli, and pausing, as he led me across to the Tuileries, to admire the sparrows taking their dust-baths in the royal precincts.

"Where are we going?" I asked, with a sudden apprehension.

"It is your eighteenth birthday," replied the Vicomte.

And, still with his arm in mine, he led me past the Cent-Gardes, up the steps, and into the hall of the Palace.

One might have thought that the Palace of the Tuileries belonged to the Vicomte de Chatellan, so perfectly at home did he seem. That he was a well-known and respected visitor was evident from the manner of the ushers. I was left in an ante-room, whilst the old gentleman, led by the usher, disappeared for a moment; then he came back, and, motioning me to follow him, he led the way into a room, where, at a desk-table, with a cigarette between his lips and a pen in his hand, sat Napoleon.

He threw the pen down and rose to greet us.

How wrinkled he looked! And how different, seen close and familiarly, from what he appeared in his carriage, amidst a cloud of dust, a glitter

of sabres, and surrounded by his guards and gentlemen!

Quite an unfearful person; old, and rather shuffling, easy-going, and putting you at your ease, rather dreamy, and speaking with a slightly nasal voice, rolling an armchair for you to sit in with his own august hands, offering cigarettes with a little shake of the box to loosen them and make your acceptance of one more easy, searching for a match-box amidst the papers on the desk: a true gentleman, though an unfortunate Emperor.

Though I was eighteen, I was still very much of a child, and that is perhaps why I felt an affection for the old gentleman at almost first sight. He remembered my father perfectly well; and, with a shade of sadness, and wreathed in his cigarette-smoke, he fell into a little reverie. We talked—he, my guardian, and I. My lameness was explained and commiserated, and, when our audience was ended and M. Ollivier was announced as waiting, he pushed us out of his cabinet, holding our hands affectionately, patting my shoulder, and all with such a grace and goodness of heart as to make me for ever his admirer and friend.

Ah, that was a good man lost in an Emperor!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MY FIRST NIGHT IN PARIS

"I AM due to dine at the Duc de Bassano's," said my guardian as I parted with him outside the Tuileries. "So, if we do not see one another till to-morrow morning, au revoir! You have plenty of money in your pocket, Paris is before you, you are young: amuse yourself."

Then the old gentlemen marched off, and left me standing on the pavement.

I could not help recalling my father's words in the room of the Duc de Morny, years ago, when he dismissed me:

"Go and play."

I had five hundred francs in my pocket, I possessed rooms in the Place Vendôme, a princely fortune lay at my back, I had a guardian everything that a guardian ought to be from a young man's point of view, I had just shaken hands with the Emperor, I had the entrée of the very best of society in France, yet I doubt if you could have found a more forlorn creature than myself if you had searched the whole of Paris.

I did not know where to go or what to do, so I went back to the Place Vendôme, superintended

the unpacking of my things, looked at my new clothes, and at seven o'clock, called by the lovely evening, I went out again, proposing to myself to dine somewhere and see life.

Over the western sky, brilliant and liquid as a topaz, hung the evening star. Paris was preparing for the festival of the night, wrapping herself in the dark gauze of shadows and spangling herself with lights. I hung on the Pont des Arts, looking at the dark lilac of the Seine, looking at the drifting barges, listening to the sounds of the city.

Then I walked on.

Oh, there is no doubt that we are led in this world when we seem to lead, and that when we take a direction that brings us to fate it is not by our own volition. This I was soon to prove.

I walked on—walked in the blindness of reverie—and opened my eyes to find myself in a new world.

A broad boulevard, a blaze of lights, cafés thronged to the pavement, the music of barrel-organs, laughter, and a crowd.

Such a crowd! Men with long hair, gentlemen in peg-top trousers, wearing smoking-caps with tassels, smoking long pipes; men in rags, hawkers yelling their wares, blind men tapping their way with their sticks, deaf men blowing penny whistles, grisettes, gamins, poets, painters, gnomes from the Rue du Truand, goblins from Montmartre, Thénard and Claquesous, Fleur de Marie and Mimi Pinson, Bouchardy and Brujon; skull-like faces, ghost-like faces, faces like roses,

paint, satin, squalor, beauty; and all drifting, as if blown by the wind of the summer night, drifting under the stars, here in shadow, here in the blaze of the roaring cafés, drifting, drifting, in a double current from and towards the voiceless and gas-spangled Seine.

Not in the bazaars of Bagdad, or on the Bardo of Tunis, could you see so fantastic a sight as the Boulevard St. Michel in the year 1869.

It fascinated me, and, mixing with the crowd, I drifted half the length of the boulevard, till suddenly I was brought up as if by the blast of a trumpet in my face. By the pavement a man had placed a little carpet, six inches square; on this carpet, lit by the light of a bull's-eye lantern, two tiny dolls, manipulated by an invisible thread, were wrestling and tumbling, to the edification of a small crowd of interested onlookers. One of these—a man with a violin under his arm, a man with a round, fresh-coloured, childish face—I knew at sight. He had not altered in nine years. He was the good angel, the violinist of that troupe of wandering musicians, whose music had held me in the gallery of the Schloss Lichtenberg.

I laughed to myself with pleasure as I watched him watching the dolls, all his simple soul absorbed in the sight, his violin under his arm, and a hand in the pocket of his shabby coat, feeling for a coin to pay for the entertainment.

Then he flung a sou on the carpet, and turned, and I raised my hat to him.

He did not know me in the least. How could he connect the child in its nightgown, looking

down from the gallery of the castle, with the young dandy who was raising his hat to him in the Boulevard St. Michel ?

"Excuse me, monsieur," said I, "but I believe I have the pleasure of your acquaintance, though we have never spoken one word to each other."

He smiled dubiously and plucked nervously at a violin-string, evidently ransacking memories of beer-gardens and café-chantants to find my face.

"You will not remember me," I went on, "but I remember you. Over nine years ago, it was, in Germany, in the Schloss Lichtenberg. You remember the Hunting Song, the horn——"

"Ach, Gott !" he cried, slapping himself on the forehead. "The child in the gallery, the one in white——"

"Yes," said I ; "that was me. You see, I don't forget my friends."

He was too astounded to say anything for a moment ; the wretched difference our clothes made in us confused his simple mind.

Then he wiped his hand with fingers outspread across his broad face. It was just as if he had wiped away his amazement like a veil, exposing the beneficent smile that was his true expression.

"Wunderschön !" said he.

"Wunderschön indeed !" replied I, laughing. "But I have much more to tell you. Come, let us walk down the boulevard together, if you have a moment to spare. You saved my life that night—you and those friends of yours—and I must tell you about it."

I knew this man quite well, though I had never



spoken to him before. A really good man is the friend of all the world ; you speak to him, and you know him as though you had known him all your life, for the soul and essence of his goodness is simplicity, and instinct tells you he has no dark corners in his soul. In his greatness he does not dream of dark corners in yours, and so at a word you become friends.

I told him my story, and then he told me his.

He had belonged to a band of wandering musicians, long since dispersed ; and on that eventful day in September, nine years ago, he and the rest of the band had been playing at Homburg. They had done badly ; and, after a long day's tramp, they saw before them, just at sunset, the towers of Lichtenberg in the distance.

He, Franzius, pointed them out to the others, and proposed that they should try their luck there ; but Marx, the leader of the band, demurred. A coin was tossed, and the answer of Fate was "Go" ; so they went.

"Ah, yes," said Franzius, as he finished. "And well it was we did so. And the child who was with you in the gallery—the little boy—how is he?"

"What child?" said I.

"He in the gallery standing beside you, dressed as a soldier, with cross-belt like the grenadiers of Pomerania."

A cold hand seemed laid on my heart, for no child had been with me in the gallery on that

night; and the description given by Franzius was the description of little Carl.

"Franzius," said I, stopping and facing him, "there was no one in the gallery but myself. Of that I am nearly positive."

There we stood facing each other in the glare of a café, with the roar of the Boul' Miche around us, each equally astonished.

Then Franzius laughed at the absurdity of the notion that he was wrong.

"With these two eyes I saw him," said he "And, more: once, when you made a movement as if to go, he plucked you by the sleeve of your little nightshirt—so" (and he plucked my coat), "as if to hold you back, to keep you there listening to the music."

"He did that?"

"Mais oui."

"Ah, well," I said, with a laugh that was rather forced, "I suppose I was so taken up with the music that I did not see him. Let us walk on."

It was quite possible that little Carl had stolen into the gallery behind me, and that I, absorbed by the music, had not seen him; the strange thing to me was the meeting with Franzius on this the first night of my freedom—it seemed like Fate.

For the first time, fully, Von Lichtenberg's mad attempt at my destruction rose before me, and demanded an explanation on another basis than that of madness. He had brought up his daughter as a boy, for it had been prophesied that she would be slain as a girl—slain by a

Saluce; and I was the last descendant of that family. Then the picture of Margaret von Lichtenberg rose before me, and its likeness to little Carl, and the fact of my own likeness to Philippe de Saluce, who had murdered Margaret so many years ago; and it was just then, walking down the Boulevard St. Michel, amidst the crush and turmoil, jostled by students and grisettes, beggars and thieves, that the question came before me: "Can the dead return? Has Margaret von Lichtenberg come back to this sad old world again as little Carl? Am I Philippe de Saluce?" And then like a pang through my heart came the recollection, the *fact*, that I had recognised the park of Lichtenberg as a thing I had seen once before. I had not recognised the schloss, but even that fact was an indirect confirmation of my fantastic idea, for the schloss had been rebuilt in 1703, and the murder of Margaret had occurred many years before that.

All these questions and ideas assailing my mind at once brought terror to my heart for a moment—only for a moment.

"Well?" said I to myself, "suppose this is true, what then? What is the world around me, dull and commonplace and sordid, even under its gold and glitter? I have seen the highest pleasures that life can give men in exchange for gold to-day in the Amber Salon of the Café de Paris. I have seen an Emperor who has attained his ambition, and the futility and weariness of it all in his face. I have

lost and left behind me the only country where dreams are real and life worth living—childhood. I love the past; and should it come to me and surround me with its romance, should some mysterious fate call it up to me, should the end be tragedy even, then welcome, for one only can die; and what care I about death if I am given one draught from the water of romance in this arid desert of commonplace things which they call the world?"

I walked beside Franzius intoxicated: the woods of Lichtenberg were around me, the winds of some far-distant day were rocking the trees. Romance had touched me with her wand. I heard the Hunting Song, the horn, the cries of the jägers; and now I was in the gallery of the schloss, the sound of the violins was in my ears, the music that was holding me from death, the ghostly child was plucking at my sleeve. Ah, God! whoever has tasted the waters of romance like that will never want wine again.

And then the wand was withdrawn, and I was walking in the Boulevard St. Michel with Franzius.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### MY FIRST NIGHT IN PARIS (*continued*)

HE was holding out his hand timidly, as if to bid me good-bye.

"Oh, but," said I, "we must not part so soon. Can you not come and have some dinner with me? What are you doing?"

He looked at a big clock over a café on the opposite side of the way, and sighed. It pointed to a quarter to nine. He was due at La Closerie de Lilas at ten—he was a member of the band; there was a students' fancy-dress ball that night, and he evidently hated the business, though he said no word of complaint. Poor Franzius! Simple soul, poet and peasant, child of a wood-cutter in the Hartz, condemned to live by the gift that God had given him, just as one might imagine some child condemned to live by the sale of some lovely toy, the present of an emperor—what a fate his was, for ever surrounded by the flare of gas, the clatter of beer-mugs, and the foetid life of music-hall and café-chantant!

"Come," I said. And, taking him by the arm, I led him into the nearest café.

You could dine here sumptuously for 1 franc 50, wine included. We found a vacant table; and as we waited for our soup the heart in me was moved at the way the world and the years had treated this friend who was part of the romance of my life; for the pitiless gaslight showed up all—the coat so old and frayed, yet still, somehow, respectable; the face showing lines that ought never to have been there. I hugged myself at the thought of my money, and what I could do for him. But in this I reckoned without Franzius.

He was hungry, and he enjoyed his dinner frankly, and like a child. He had the whole bottle of wine to himself. He had not had such a dinner for a long time, and he said so. Then I gave him the best cigar the café could supply, a black affair that smelt like burning rags, and we wandered out of the café, he, at least in outward appearance, the happiest man in Paris.

"And the Closerie de Lilas?" said I, when we were on the pavement.

"Ah, oui!" sighed Franzius, coming back from the paradise of digestion. "It is true that I should be getting there, and we must say good-bye."

"You said it was a fancy-dress ball?"

"Yes."

"I'd have gone with you only for that."

"But you will do as you are!" cried he, his face lighting up with pleasure at the thought of bringing me along with him. "Ma foi! it is not altogether fancy-dress, for Messieurs les Etudiants

have not always the money to spend on dress. People go as they like."

"Very well," I replied. "Allons!" And we started.

When we reached our destination people were arriving fast, and there was a good deal of noise. A Japanese lantern was going in, and a cabinet was being put out by two grave-faced gendarmes. The cabinet was shouting, laughing, and protesting; at least, the head was that stuck out of the top of it, and belonged presumably to the two legs that appeared below. It was very funny and fantastic, the gravity of the officers of the law contrasting so quaintly with the business they were about. Inside the big saloon all was light and colour and laughter, the band was tuning up, and Franzius rushed to the orchestra, promising to see me before I went.

I leaned against the wall and looked around me.

What a scene! Monkeys, goats, cabbages, pierrots, pierrettes, men in everyday clothes, girls in dominoes—and very little else—and then, boom, boom; the band broke into a waltz, and set the whole fantastic scene whirling. A girl, dressed as a bonbon, danced up to me, nearly kicked me in the face, and danced off again, seizing a carrot by the waist and whirling round with him. Too lame to join in the revelry, I watched, leaning against the wall and feeling horribly alone amidst all this gaiety.

I was standing like this when a fresh eruption of guests burst into the room—two men and three

girls, all friends evidently, and linked together arm-in-arm.

It was well I had the wall behind me to lean against, for one of the girls, a lovely blonde, dressed as a shepherdess, was the Countess Feliciani!

The woman I had lost my heart to as a child, the woman I had seen touched by premature old age in the little sitting-room of the Hôtel de Mayence, the same woman rejuvenated, and turned by some magic wand into a girl of eighteen, laughing and joyous.

I gazed at this prodigy; and the prodigy, who had unlinked herself from her companions, was now whirling before me in the waltz, in the arms of a grenadier with a cock's feather stuck in his hat, and totally unconscious of the commotion she had raised in my breast.

"You aren't dancing?"

"No," I said. "I'm lame."

She looked at me to see if I were serious or not; then she made a grimace, and linked her arm in mine. It was the bonbon girl. The dance was over, and the carrot had vanished to the bar, without, it seems, offering her refreshment. She had beady, black eyes, a low forehead, and rather thick lips.

"That's bad," said she, "to be lame. Let us take a stroll." And she led me towards the bar.

How many times I led that damsel, or rather was led by her, towards the bar during the evening, I can't tell. After every dance she came to me and commiserated me on my lameness. She



was not in great request, it seems, as a partner, dancing with anybody she could seize upon, and coming to me, as to a drinking-fountain, to allay her thirst. I did not care. I scarcely heeded. All my mind was absorbed by the girl, the marvellous girl with the golden hair, who was the Countess Feliciani reborn.

"Do you know her name?" I asked the bonbon on one of our strolls in search of refreshment.

"Whose? Oh, that doll with the yellow hair? Know her name? Why, the whole quarter knows her name. Marie—what is it? She's a model at Cardillac's. A brandy for me, with some ice in it. Hurry up! There's the band beginning again."

The ball had now become infected by the element of riot. Scarcely had the music struck up when it ceased. Shrill screams, shouts, and sounds of scuffling came from the saloon, and, leaving the bonbon, who seemed quite unconcerned, to finish her brandy, I ran out and nearly into the arms of two gendarmes, who were making for the centre of the floor, where the carrot and the grenadier with the cock's feather were engaged in mortal combat. A ring of shouting spectators surrounded the combatants, and amidst them stood the shepherdess, weeping.

She had been dancing with the grenadier, it seems, when they had cannoned against the carrot and his partner. Hence the blows. Scarcely had the gendarmes seized upon the combatants when some one struck a chandelier. The crash and the shower of glass were like a

signal. Shouts, shrieks, the crowing of cocks, the blowing of horns seized from the orchestra, the smash of glass, the crash of benches overthrown, filled the air.

The lights went out ; some one hit me a blow on the head that made me see a thousand stars ; and then I was in the street, with some one on my arm, some one I had seized and rescued ; and the great white moon of May was lighting us, and the street, and the entry to the Closerie de Lilas, that bear-garden that the police had now seized upon and closed. We had only just escaped in time. More and more gendarmes were hurrying up ; and speechless, like deer who scent the hunters, we ran, our shadows running before us, as if leading the way.

"We are safe here," I said, glad to pull up, for my lameness did not lend grace to my running. "We are safe here. Those gendarmes are so busy with the others, they have no time to run after us."

She had been crying when I pulled her out of the turmoil. She was laughing now.

"Oh, mon Dieu !" said she. "That Changarnier ! Never will I dance with him again."

"Who is Changarnier ?" I asked, looking at the lock of golden hair that had fallen loose on her shoulder, and which the moonlight was silvering, just as sorrow had silvered the hair of the once beautiful Countess Feliciani.

"He is a beast !" replied she. "Is my dress torn ?" She held out her dress by a finger and thumb on either side, and rotated before me

solemnly in the moonlight, so that I might examine it back and front.

"No," I said; "it is not torn, but you have lost your crook."

"Yes," replied the shepherdess; "but I have found my sheep. Oh, I saw you looking at me. You followed me with your eyes the whole evening. You made Changarnier furious: he said you were an aristocrat. Who are you, M. l'Aristocrat?"

"And you?"

"I am a shepherdess. And you?"

"I am an aristocrat."

She laughed, put her arm in mine, and we walked, the great moon casting our shadows before us.

"If we go this way," said she, "we can get something to eat. This is the Rue Dupetit Thouars. Are you hungry?"

"Are you?"

"Famished. Have you any money?"

"Lots."

"Good. Ah, yes; I saw you watching me. And, do you know, my friend, I have seen you before, or some one like you—and you look so friendly. Indeed, I would have spoken to you but for Changarnier. He is so jealous! You are lame?"

"Yes, I am lame."

"Then," said she, "I can never have met you before, for I have never known a lame man. But here we are."

She led the way into a small café. The place

was crowded enough, but we managed to get a seat. The people at supper were mostly the remnants of the fancy-dress ball that had escaped from the police.

I ordered everything that the place could supply, and I watched her as she ate.

She was very beautiful; quite the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, with the exception of the Countess Feliciani.

"You are not drinking! Why, you are not eating! What is the matter with you, M. l'Aristocrat?"

"I am in love," replied I.

She laughed.

A Red Indian, who was supping at the next table with a grizzly-bear who had taken his head off, to eat more conveniently, spoke to her occasionally over his shoulder, giving details of their escape; and I was glad enough when the bill was presented, and we wandered out again into the street.

The supper had put her in the highest spirits. She laughed at our fantastic shadows as we walked arm-in-arm down the silent Rue Dupetit Thouars. She chatted, not noticing my silence: told me of Cardillac's studio, and the "rapins," and the rules, and the life, and what her dress cost. "Thirty-five francs the material alone, for I made it myself. Do you admire it?"

"Yes."

"Oh, how dull you are! Yes! You ought to have said: 'Mademoiselle, your toilet is charming.' Now, repeat it after me."

"Mademoiselle, your toilet is charming."

"Good heavens! If a hearse could speak, it would speak like that. You are not gay. Never mind; you are all the nicer. Ah!" And she fell into a sentimental and despondent fit, drawing closer to me, so that our shadows made one.

Then, at a door in a side-street, down which we had turned, she stopped, and drew a key from her pocket.

"I must see you again," I said. "It is absolutely necessary. When can I see you, and where?"

The door was open now. She drew me close to her, as if to whisper something, but she whispered nothing. Our lips had met in the darkness.

Then I was in the hall; the door was closed, and, following her, I was led up a steep staircase, past a landing, up another staircase to a door. She opened the door, and the moonlight struck us in the face. The great moon was framed in the lattice window, and against its face the fronds of a plant growing on the sill in a flower-pot were silhouetted. The bare, poorly furnished room was filled with light, pure as driven snow.

She shut the door, with a little laugh, and I took her in my arms.

"Eloise!" I said.

She pushed me away, and stared at me with the laugh withered on her lips. Never shall I forget her face.

"Have you forgotten Toto?"

"Toto! Who—where——"

Recollections were rushing upon her, but she

did not yet understand. She seemed straining to catch some distant voice.

"The Castle of Lichtenberg, the pine-forests, little Carl. I tried to find you, but you were gone—years ago. I was only a child, and I could not find you. But I have found you now!"

She was clinging to me, sobbing wildly; and I made her sit down on the side of the little bed. Then I sat by her, holding her whilst the sobs seemed to tear her to pieces.

"I knew you," she said at last. "I knew you, but I did not recollect—little Toto! How could I tell?"

Ah, yes, how could she tell? Through the miserable veils that lay between her and that happy time, the past seemed vague to her as a dream of earliest childhood.

Then, bit by bit, with her head on my shoulder, the miserable tale unfolded itself. The Countess Feliciani had died when Eloise was fifteen. They were in the greatest poverty, living in the Rue St. Lazare. It was the old, old, wicked, weary story that makes us doubt at times the existence of a God.

A model at Cardillac's and this wretched room. That was the story.

We had entered that room a man and woman, the woman with a laugh on her lips. We sat on the side of the bed together—two children. Children just as we were that day sitting by the pond in the woods of Lichtenberg, with little Carl and his drum.

For Eloise had never grown up. The thing she was then in heart and spirit she was now.

Then, as the moon drew away slowly, and the room grew darker, we talked; and I can fancy how the evil ones who are for ever about us covered their faces and cowered as they listened and watched.

"And little Carl?" asked Eloise. "Where is he?"

The question, spoken in the semi-darkness, caused a shiver to run through me.

"Who knows?" I said. "Or what he is doing? Eloise, I am half afraid. I met a man to-night, a musician; he saw me at the schloss that time which seems so long ago. He spoke about Carl, and then I came with him to the ball. But for him, I would not have met you, and it all seems like fate. Let us talk of ourselves. You can't stay here in this house: you must leave it to-morrow. I will arrange everything. I am rich. Think of it!"

She laughed and clung closer to me. Despite her bitter experiences, she had no more real knowledge of the world than myself. Money was a thing to amuse oneself with—a thing very hard to obtain.

"You will leave this place and live in the country. You will never go to Cardillac's again. Think, Eloise; it is May! You never see the country here in Paris. The hawthorn is out, and the woods at Etioilles are more beautiful than the forest was at Lichtenberg. Why, you are crying!"

"I am crying because I am happy," said she, whispering the words against my shoulder.

Then I left her.

I cannot tell you my feelings. I cannot put them into words. It was as if I had seen Moloch face to face, seen the brazen monster in the square of Carthage, seen the officiating priests and the little veiled children seized by the brazen arms and plunged in the burning stomach.

I had seen that day Eloise Feliciani, the living child, and Amy Féraud, the cinder remnants of a child consumed; and God in His mercy had given me power to seize Eloise from the monster, scorched, indeed, but living.

I found the Boulevard St. Michel almost deserted now, and took my way along it to the Seine.

"What are you to do with her?"

That is the question I would have asked myself had I been a man of the world. But I knew nothing of the world or the convenances. I was not in love with her. Had I met her for the first time that night it might have been different: but for me she was just the child of Lichtenberg, the little figure I had last seen standing at the door of the Hôtel de Mayence, holding in her arms the black cat with the amber eyes.

What was I to do with her? I had already made up my mind. I would put her to live in the Pavilion of Saluce. I had not a real friend in the world except old Joubert, or a thing to love. I would be no longer lonely. What good times we would have!



I leaned over the parapet of the Pont des Arts, looking at the river, all lilac in the dawn, thinking of the woods at Saluce, and watching myself in fancy wandering there with Eloise.

Then I returned to the Place Vendôme. It was very late, or, rather, very early; and before our house a carriage was drawn up, and from it M. le Vicomte Armand de Chatellan was being assisted.

He had only just returned from the Duc de Bassano's, and he was very tipsy. He was an object-lesson to vulgar tipplers. Severe and stately, assisted by Beril on one side and the footman on the other, the grand old aristocrat marched towards the door he could not see.

I watched the pro-consular silhouette vanish. One could almost hear the murmur of the togaed crowd and the "Consul Romanus" of the lictors.

## CHAPTER XX

### WHEN IT IS MAY

THE meeting with Eloise so disturbed my mind that I had quite forgotten one thing—Franzius. I had promised to see him after the ball—an impossible promise to fulfil considering the way the affair ended.

When I awoke at six on this bright May morning, which was the herald of a new chapter of my life, Franzius and his old fiddle, one under the arm of the other, entered my mind directly the door of consciousness was opened by Joubert's knock at the door of my room.

I had told him to waken me at six. So, though I had fallen asleep directly my head touched the pillow, I had slept only two hours when the summons came to get up.

But I did not care. I was as fresh as a lark. Youth, good health, the absence of any earthly trouble, and the spirit of May, which peeped with the sun into the courtyard of the Hôtel de Chatellan, made life a thing worth waking up to.

But it was different with Joubert. He was yawning, and as sulky as any old servant could

possibly be, as he put out my clothes and drew up the blind.

"Joubert," said I, sitting up in bed, "do you remember, nine years ago, when we were staying at the Schloss Lichtenberg, a little girl in a white dress and a blue scarf, and white pantalettes with frills to them?"

"Mordieu!" grumbled Joubert, putting out my razors. "Do I remember? Well, what about her?"

"I met her last night."

Joubert, who, with a towel over his arm, was just on the point of going into the bathroom adjoining, wheeled round.

"Met her! And where?"

"At a students' ball." Then I told him the whole business—told him of the ruin of the Felicianis, of the death of the Countess, of Eloise's forlorn position, and of the plans I had half made for her future; to all of which he listened without enthusiasm. "But that is not all," said I; and told him of my meeting with Franzius, the wandering musician, whose music had held me in the gallery of the schloss, whilst the assassin had been at work plunging his dagger into the pillow of my bed.

"You met him, and he brought you to the place where you met her," said Joubert when I had finished. "Mark me, something evil will come of this. Mon Dieu! the Lichtenbergs have not done with us yet. On the night before the General fought with Baron Imhoff he came to the pavilion—you remember that night? He took

me outside in the dark—you remember he took me out? And what said he? Ah, he said a lot. He said: 'Joubert, even if I fall to-morrow the Lichtenbergs will not have done with us. Fate, like an old cursed mole'—those were his words—'has been working underground in the families of the Saluces and Lichtenbergs for three hundred years and more. She's showing her nose, and what will be the end of it the Virgin in heaven only can tell. If I fall, Joubert,' said he, 'I trust you to keep my boy apart from any one who has ever had anything to do with the Lichtenbergs.' And look you," continued Joubert, "the first night you have liberty to go and amuse yourself, what happens? You meet two of the lot that were at the schloss: one leads you to the other, and now you are going to set the girl up in the pavilion. Think you I would mind if you filled the pavilion with your girls, filled the château, stuffed the moat with them? Not I; but there you are: wagon-loads, army corps of girls to choose from, and you strike the one of all others—— Peste! and what's the use of my talking? You were ever the same, self-willed, just the same as when you were a child you would have your box of tin soldiers beside you in the carriage instead of packed safely in the baggage—just the same!" And so forth and so on, flinging my childish vagaries in my teeth just as a mother or an old nurse might have done.

"All right, Joubert," said I, dressing; "there is no use in arguing with you. I am going to

offer the pavilion as a home to Mademoiselle Feliciani. That is settled. No evil can come to me for helping the unfortunate."

"Yes; that's what those sort of people call themselves," grumbled Joubert. "Good name, too, for her."

"So," I finished, "order a carriage to the door as quick as it can be got, and come with me to Etiolles, for I want to get the pavilion in order."

"Monsieur's orders as to the carriage shall be attended to," said the old man, with fine sarcasm, considering that he had turned "Monsieur" over his knee and spanked him with a slipper often enough in the past. "But, as for me, I will not go; no, I will not go!"

He vanished into the bathroom to prepare my bath.

I ordered a servant to obtain for me Franzius's address at the Closerie de Lilas. Then, when the front door was opened for me, I found the carriage waiting, and on the box, beside the coachman—Joubert!

I smiled as I got in, and we started.

It was an open carriage. In the superb May morning Paris lay white and almost silent; the Rue St. Honoré was deserted, and a weak wind, warm and lilac perfumed, blew from the west under a sky of palest sapphire. We passed Bercy, we passed through Charenton and Ville-neuve St. Georges, the poplars whitening to the west wind, the villages wakening, the cocks crowing, and the sun flooding all the holiday world of May with tender tints. The white

houses, the vineyards, the greenswards embanking the sparkling Seine—how beautiful they were, and how good life was ! How good life was that morning in May, effaced now by so many weary years, effaced from time, but not from my recollection, where it lies vivid as then, with the Seine sparkling, and the wind blowing the poplar-trees that have never lost a leaf !

The road took us by the skirt of the forest, ringing with the laughter and the chatter of the birds.

Old Fauchard's married daughter was in charge of the pavilion. I had not seen the place for a long time ; it had been redecorated by order of my guardian, and the old gentleman used it occasionally for luncheon-parties ; it was a charming rural retreat, where the Amy Férauds and Francine Volnays of the Théâtre Montparnasse enjoyed themselves, plucking bulrushes from the ponds in the forest, and chasing, with shrill laughter, the echoes of the Pompadour-haunted groves.

The little dining-room had a painted ceiling—a flock of doves circling in a blue sky. The kitchen was red tiled, and clean as a Dutch dairy. The bedrooms—white and spotless, and simply furnished—were perfumed with the breath of the forest coming through the always open windows ; the hangings were of chintz, flower-sprinkled, and light in tone. If May herself had chosen to build and furnish a little house to live in, she could not have improved on the Pavilion of Saluce, furnished as it was by a Parisian up-

holsterer at the direction of a Parisian boulevardier.

I had breakfast in the kitchen—there was nothing to be done, the place was in perfect order—and, telling Fauchard's daughter (Madame Ancelot) that I would return that afternoon with a lady who would take up her abode at the pavilion for an indefinite time, I returned to Paris, dropping Joubert in the Rue St. Honoré, and telling the coachman to take me to the Rue Dupetit Thouars.

## CHAPTER XXI

“O YOUTH, WHAT A STAR THOU ART!”

IN the Rue Dupetit Thouars I sent the carriage home. The horses had done over forty miles. I would take Eloise down to Etiolles by rail, or we would hire a carriage. It did not matter in the least; it was only twelve o'clock, and we had the whole day before us.

It would be hard for the worldly minded to understand my happiness as I walked down the Rue Dupetit Thouars towards the street where she lived. I had found something to love and cherish, but I was not in the least in love with Eloise after the fashion of what men call love. You must remember that ever since my earliest childhood I had been very much alone in the world. Drilled and dragooned by old Joubert, and treated kindly enough by my father, I had missed, without knowing it, the love of a mother or a sister. Little Eloise had been the only girl-child with whom I had ever played: and, though our acquaintance had been short enough, that fact had made her influence upon me doubly potent. I had found her again. She was now a woman, but, for me, she was still the child of the



gardens of Lichtenberg. And the strange psychological fact remains that, though I had loved the beautiful Countess Feliciani with my childish heart, loved her almost as a man loves a woman, not a bit of that sort of love had I for Eloise, who was the Countess's facsimile. The very fact of the extraordinary likeness would have been sufficient to annul passion.

Perhaps it was because I had seen the Countess suddenly turned old and grey, sitting in that wretched room in the Hôtel de Mayence, the ruin of herself, a parable on the vanity of beauty and earthly things.

I do not know. I only can say that my love for Eloise was as pure as the love of a brother for a sister; and that my heart, as I came along the sunlit Rue Dupetit Thouars, rejoiced exceedingly and was glad.

I turned down the dingy little Rue Soufflot, and there, at the door, going into the dingy old house where she lived, poised like a white butterfly on the step, was Eloise.

"Eloise!" I cried, and she turned.

My hat flew off to salute her, as she stood there in the full afternoon sunshine like a little bit of the vanished May morning trapped and held in some wizard's filmy net.

"Toto!" cried Eloise, in a voice of glad surprise.

And, as our hands met, I heard from one of the lower windows of the house a metallic laugh.

Glancing at the window, I saw the face of the grenadier of the night before, the one who had

worn a cock's feather in his hat—Changarnier the student, who, according to the bonbon girl, was so jealous of my new-found friend.

He had a cap with a tassel on his head, a long pipe between his lips, his linen was not over-clean. A typical student of the Latin Quarter, confrère of Schaunard and Gustave Colline, he laughed again, showing his yellow teeth. I looked at him, and he did not laugh thrice.

"Come," I said, taking the hand of Eloise, whose brightness had suddenly dimmed, as though the sound from the house had cast a spell upon it. "Come." And I led her towards the Rue Dupetit Thouars.

She came hesitatingly, downcast, as if fearful of being followed; and I felt like a knight leading some lady of old-time from the den of the wizard who had held her long years in bondage.

In the Rue Dupetit Thouars she seemed to breathe more freely.

"I had forgotten Changarnier," said she, in a broken voice. "How horrible of him to laugh at us!"

"Beast!" said I, fury rising up in my heart at the fate that had compelled her to such a life and such surroundings.

"Ah! but," sighed Eloise, "he can be kind, too—it is his way."

"Well, let us forget him," I replied. "Eloise, you are mine now. You will be just the same as you were long ago. Do you remember, when we were all together at Lichtenberg, and the King that morning put his hand on your head?"

You remember when we met him in the corridor, and the Graf von Bismarck? You were holding his hand when I saw you first, and he was talking to my father and General Hahn and Major von der Goltz. Then you saw me——”

“Ah, yes!” cried Eloise, her dismal fit vanishing; “and you made such a funny little bow. And—do you remember my dress?”

“Oui, mademoiselle.”

“Oui, mademoiselle! Oh, how stupid you are!” cried she, catching up the old refrain from years ago. She laughed deliciously. Childhood had caught us back, or, rather, had flung back the world from around us, for we were still children in heart and soul.

“And now,” said I, “what are you to do for clothes?”

“For clothes?”

“You are not going back to that place; you are never going near it again. You must buy everything you want. I have plenty of money, and it is yours. See!” And I pulled out a handful of gold.

“O ciel!” sighed Eloise. “How delightful! But, Toto——”

“No ‘buts.’ What is the use of money if you do not spend it? I have a little house for you, all prepared, in the country. Oh, wait till you see it—wait till you see it. We will take the train; but you must buy yourself what you want first, and I can only give you an hour. Will an hour be enough?”

She would have kissed me, I believe, there and

then, only that we were now in the Boul' Miche. Her butterfly mind was entirely fascinated by the idea of new clothes and the country. The dress she was in, of some white material, though old enough perhaps, was newly washed and speckless, and graceful as a woman's dress of that day could be. Her hat, in my eyes, was daintier far than any hat I had seen in my life. Women, no doubt, could have picked holes in her poor attire, but no man. Just as she was that day I always see her now, beyond the fashions and the years, a figure garbed in the old, old fashion of spring, sweet as the perfume of lilac-branches and the songs of birds. At the Maison Dorée, 152, Boulevard St. Michel, within the space of an hour, and for the modest sum of a hundred francs or so, she bought—I do not know what; but the purchases filled four huge cardboard boxes covered with golden bees—the true luggage of a butterfly. When they were packed in and about a fiacre I proposed food.

"I am too happy to eat," said Eloise; so, at the fruiterer's a little way down, I bought oranges and a great bunch of Bordighera violets, and we started.

It was late afternoon when we reached the little station. Ah, what a delightful journey that was, and what an extraordinary one! Happy as lovers, yet without a thought of love; good comrades, irresponsible as birds, laughing at everything and nothing; eating our oranges, and criticising the folk at the stations we passed.

"Listen!" said Eloise, as we stood on the platform and the train drew off into the sunlit distance.

I listened. The wind was blowing in the trees by the station. From some field beyond the poplar-trees came the faint and far-off bleating of lambs. Behind and beyond these sweet yet trivial sounds lay the great silence of the country—the silence that encompasses the leagues of growing wheat, the pasture-lands all gemmed with buttercups and cowslips; the blue, songless rivers and the green, whispering rushes; the silence of spring, which is made up of a million voices unheard but guessed, and presided over by the skylark hanging in the sparkling blue a star of song.

Men, I think, never knew the true beauty of the country till the railway, like a grimy magician, enabled them to stand at some little wayside station, and, with the sounds of the city still ringing in their ears, to listen to the voices of the trees and the birds.

I sent a porter to the inn for a fly; and when it arrived, and the luggage was packed on and about it, we started.

## CHAPTER XXII

### A POLITICAL RECEPTION

"It is like a cage," said Eloise, "with all the birds outside."

We were sitting in the little room of the pavilion that served as dining-room and drawing-room combined: the windows were open, the sun had set, and the birds in the wood were going to bed. Liquid calls from the depths of the trees, chatterings in the near branches, and occasional sounds like the flirting of a fan came with the warm breeze that stirred the chintz curtains and the curls of Eloise's golden hair as she sat on the broad window-seat, her busy hands in her lap, like white butterflies come to rest, listening, listening, with eyes fixed on the gently waving branches—listening, and entranced by the voices of the birds.

Through the conversation of the blackbird and the thrush came what the sparrows had to say, and the "tweet-tweet" of the swallows under the eaves.

All day long, if you listened at the pavilion, you could hear the wood-dove's mournful recitative, "Don't *cry* so, Susie—don't *cry* so, Susie—

don't *cry* so, Susie—*don't*," at intervals, now near, now far.

The wood-doves had ceased their monotonous advice, and now the swallows took flight for the pyramids of dreamland, and silence took the little, chattering sparrows in her apron, and then the greater birds. Branch by branch she robbed, reaching here, reaching there, till at last one alone was left, a thrush on some topmost bough, where the light of day still lingered. Then she found him too; and you could hear the wind drawing over the forest, and the trees folding their hands in sleep.

Then, from away where the dark pools were, came the "jug-jug-jug" of a nightingale asking the time of her mate, and the liquid, thrilling reply, "Too early." Then silence, and the whisper of ten thousand trees saying, "Hush!—let us sleep."

"Would monsieur like the lamp?"

It was Fauchard's daughter, lamp in hand, at the door. Her rough-hewn peasant's face, lit by the upcast light, was turned towards us with a pleasant expression. I suppose we were both so young and so innocent in appearance that she could not look sourly upon us, though our proceedings must have seemed irregular enough to her honest mind. She looked upon us, doubtless, as lovers. We were good to look upon, though I say it, who am now old. We were young; and everything, it seems to me in these later days, is forgivable to youth.

"O youth, what a star thou art!"

. . . . .

Then I rose and took my hat from the table near by.

"But you are not going?" said Eloise, one white hand seizing my coat-sleeve, and a tremble of surprise in her voice.

"But I must," replied I. "I must get back to Paris. I will come to-morrow morning. Madame Ancelot here will look after you. There are books. You will be happy, and I will come back in the morning, and we will have a long day in the forest. We will take our luncheon in a basket, and have a picnic."

"Ah, well!" sighed Eloise, looking timidly from me to Madame Ancelot, who, having placed the lamp on the table, stood, with all a peasant's horror of ventilation, waiting to shut the windows, "if you *must* go—— But you will come back?"

"To-morrow; and you will look after her, Madame Ancelot, will you not?"

"Mais oui!" said the good woman with a smile, and as if she were talking to two children. "Mademoiselle need not be afraid: there are no robbers here; nothing more dangerous than the rabbits and the birds; and if there were—why, Ancelot has his gun."

Eloise tripped over to the woman and gave her a kiss; then, glancing back at me, she laughed and ran out into the tiny hall to get her hat.

"I will go with you as far as—a little way," she said, as she tied the strings of her hat, craning up on her toe-tips to see herself in a high mirror on the wall.



On the drawbridge she hung for a moment, peeping over at the still water of the moat, in which the stars were beginning to cast reflections.

"How dark, and still, and secret it looks," murmured she. "Toto, has it ever drowned any one?"

"Why do you ask?" replied I to the question that I myself had put to Joubert years ago.

"I don't know," said Eloise, "but it looks as if it had."

Ah, the evil moat! The water-lilies blossomed there in summer; all the length of a summer's day the darting dragon-flies cast their gauze-blue reflections upon the water. Amy Féraud and Francine Volnay might cast their laughter and cigarette-ends for ever on its surface, leaning over the bridge-rail and seeing nothing. It was left for the heart of a child to question its secret and divine its treason.

The path from the pavilion cut through the trees and opened on the carriage-drive to the château. When we reached the drive, Eloise, terrified by the dark and the unaccustomed trees, was afraid to return alone. So I had to go back with her to the drawbridge.

"To-morrow?" said she.

"To-morrow!" replied I.

She gave me a moist kiss—such as children give; then, as if that were not enough, she flung her arms around my neck, squeezed me, and then ran across the drawbridge, laughing.

"Good night!" I cried; and "Good night!" followed me through the trees as I ran, for, even

running most of the way, I had scarcely time to catch the last train to Paris.

It was late when I reached Paris; and, as I drove through the blazing streets, I felt as though I had taken a deep breath of some intoxicating air. The vision of Eloise in her new home pursued me. I felt as though I had taken a child from the jaws of a dragon. I had done a good act, and God repaid me; for Eloise had brought me a gift far better than pearls. She had brought me all that old freshness of long ago; she had brought me fresh in her hands the flowers of childhood; she had given me back the warmth of heart, the clearness of sight, the joy in little things, the joy without cause, which the war of sex and the world robs from a man.

A breath from my earliest youth—that was Eloise.

At the Place Vendôme, the servant whom I had commissioned to find out Franzius's address handed me a paper on which he had written it. It was in the Rue Dijon, Boulevard Montparnasse.

I put the paper in my pocket, ran upstairs, and, hearing voices and laughter through the partly opened door of the great salon on the first floor, I burst into the room.

Great heavens! The child who gets into a shower-bath, and, not knowing, pulls the string, could not receive a greater shock than I.

The room was filled with gentlemen in correct evening attire. It was, in fact, one of what my guardian was pleased to call his "political receptions."

I was dressed in a morning frock-coat, the dust of Etiolles was on my boots, my hair was in disorder, my face flushed. If I had entered rolling drunk, in evening clothes, I would not have committed so great a crime against the convenances.

And it was too late to back out, simply because my impetuosity had carried me into the room too far.

My guardian gazed at the spectacle before him, but not by as much as the lifting of an eyebrow did that fine old gentleman betray his discomfiture.

He turned from the Spanish Ambassador, to whom he was talking; came forward and took my hand; inquired, in a voice raised slightly so as to be distinct, about my *journey*; apologised for not having informed me that it was one of his political evenings, and introduced me to the Duc de Cadore.

Then—and this was his punishment—he totally ignored me for the remainder of the evening.

I cannot remember what the Duc de Cadore said to me, or I to him; but we talked, and I ate ices which I could not taste. I would have frankly beaten a retreat, now that I had made my entry and faced the fire, but for a young man who, engaged in a conversation with two of the attachés of the Austrian Embassy, looked in my direction every now and then. It was my evil genius, the Comte de Coigny—the same who, as a boy in the garden of the Hôtel de Morny, had told me of the ruin of the Felicianis.

I had not come across him since he left the Bourdaloue College. He was now, it seems, an attaché of the Emperor's, and he was just the same as of old, though bigger—a stout young man, with a stolid, insolent face; and I guessed, by his side-glances, that his conversation with the Austrians was about me, and that I was being discussed critically and sarcastically.

God! how I hated that young man at that moment; and how I longed to cross the room, and, flinging the convenances to the winds, smack him in the face! But that pleasure was to be reserved for another hand than mine.

When the unhappy political reception was over, and the last of the guests departed, I sought my guardian in the smoking-room, to make my apologies.

"My dear sir," said my guardian, with a little, kindly laugh that took the stiffness from the formality of his address and turned it into a little joke, "on my heart, I did not perceive what you were attired in. A host is oblivious of all things but the face and the hand of his guests. Were the Duc de Bassano or M. le Duc de Cadore to turn up at a reception of mine attired as a rag-picker, I would only be conscious that I was receiving the Duc de Cadore or the Duc de Bassano. They would be for me themselves *however their fellow guests might sneer!*

"And how have we enjoyed ourselves in Paris?" asked the kindly old gentleman, turning from the subject of dress, and lighting a fresh cigar.

"Oh, very well," I said. "And, by the way, I have met an old acquaintance."

"Ah!"

"Mademoiselle Feliciani, a daughter of Count Feliciani."

"Count Feliciani, the—er—defaulter?"

"I don't know what he may have done," said I, "but I met them years ago, at the Schloss Lichtenberg. Before they were entirely ruined. I met Mademoiselle Feliciani last night in a most curious way; and she has been living in great poverty. In fact, I"—and here I blushed, I believe—"I have taken her under my protection."

Protection! Oh, hideous word, uttered in the simplicity of youth! Beautiful word, that men have debased—men who would debase the angels, could they with their foul hands touch those immaculate wings.

"I hope, sir, you don't object?"

"Object!"

"I have given her the pavilion to live in," continued I, encouraged by my guardian's smile of frank approval. "The only thing that grieves me is," I went on, "that her mother is dead, and that I cannot offer her my protection, too."

My guardian opened his eyes at this; and I, blundering along, blushing, surprised into one of those charming confidences of youth which youth so rarely betrays, told him of the beauty of the Countess Feliciani, and of how much I had admired her as a child, and how I had visited her and seen her, prematurely aged, ruined, the gold of her beautiful hair turned to snow, her

face lined with the wrinkles of age ; and then it was, I think, that M. le Vicomte began to perceive that my relationship with Eloise was other than what he had imagined.

"A pure love !" I can imagine him saying to himself. "Why, mon Dieu ! that might lead to marriage—marriage with a Feliciani—an outcast, a beggar ! We must arrange all this : it is a question of diplomacy."

But by no sign did he betray these thoughts. He listened to the woes of the Felicianis, the picture of sympathetic benevolence ; and, when I had finished, he said, "Ah, poor things !" And then, after a moment's reverie, as though he were recalling the love affairs of his own youth, "It is sad. Tell me, are you very much enamoured of this Mademoiselle Feliciani ?"

"Good heavens !" I said. "No. I care for her only—only—that is to say, I only care for herself."

A confused statement apparently, yet an unconscious and profound criticism on love.

The Vicomte raised his eyebrows. He was, I think, frankly puzzled. He saw my meaning—that I cared for Eloise as a child or a sister. His profound experience of life had never, perhaps, brought a similar case to the bar of his reason ; his profound knowledge of men and women told him of the danger of the thing.

"How has Mademoiselle Feliciani been living since the death of her mother ?" asked he.

"She has been a model at Cardillac's studio," I replied.

"Indeed? Poor girl! And now, may I ask, what do you propose to do with this protégée of yours?"

"I? Just give her a home and what money she requires."

"In fact," said the Vicomte, "you, a young man of nineteen, are going to adopt a beautiful young girl of the same age, or younger, out of pure charity, give her a house to live in, pay her expenses——"

"Yes," I replied. "God has given me money; and I thank God that He has given me the means of rescuing the sweetest and the purest woman living from a life that could lead her nowhere but to the Morgue. Monsieur, what is the matter?"

The Vicomte was crimson, and making movements with his hands as though to wave away a gauzy veil. At least, that was the impression the outspread fingers gave me.

Then he laughed out aloud, the first time I had ever heard him laugh so.

"Forgive me," he said. "I am not, indeed, laughing at you. I am amused at no thing or person: it is the imbroglio. What you have told me is interesting, and I take it as a profound secret. Say nothing of it to any one; for if it were known——"

"Yes?"

"Why, the whole of Paris would be laughing!"

I arose, very much affronted. And I was a fool, for what my guardian said was perfectly correct. The situation to a French mind was as amusing as a Palais-Royal farce. But I

knew little of the world, and, as I say, I arose very much affronted.

“Good night, sir !”

My guardian rose up and bowed kindly and courteously, but with the faintest film of ice veiling his manner.

“Good night !”



## CHAPTER XXIII

### FÊTE CHAMPÊTRE

"GOOD MORNING!"

"Ah! there you are. Toto—see!"

Eloise, without a hat, working in the little garden of the pavilion, held up a huge spade for my inspection. The moat divided us, and I had my foot on the drawbridge, preparing to cross.

Up at six, I had come by an early train, and walked from the station. It was now after ten, and great was the beauty of the morning.

"I have dug up quite a lot," said Eloise. "Look!—all that. Madame Ancelot says I will make a gardener by and by—by and by—by and by," she sang, tossing the spade amidst some weeds; and then, hanging on my arm, she drew me into the house.

A perfume of violets filled the little sitting-room. The place was changed. The subtle hand of a woman had rearranged the chairs, looped back the curtains and arranged them in folds of grace, peopled with violets empty bowls, wrought wonders with a touch.

On the sofa lay a heap of white material, which she swept away.

"That will be a dress to-morrow or the next day," said Eloise. "You will laugh when you see it, it will be so beautiful. And I have packed a basket for our picnic. Wait!" She ran from the room, and I waited.

Looking back, now, one of my pleasantest recollections is how she took my money, took the new life I had given her, thanking me indeed, full of gratitude, but as a thing quite natural and between friends. If we had wandered out of the gardens of Lichtenberg together, children, hand in hand, and passed straight through the years as one passes through a moment of time, to find ourselves at Etioles still hand in hand, our relationship—as regards money affairs—could not have been less unstrained. I had bonbons; she had none; I shared with her. Nothing could be more natural.

She returned with the basket packed, and her hat, which she put on before the mirror. Then we started on our picnic in the woods, I carrying the basket.

"What part of the woods are you going to?" inquired Madame Ancelot as we crossed the drawbridge.

"The grand pool," replied I, "if it is still there, and I can find it."

Then, a footstep, and the world of the woods surrounded us, its silence and its music.

The place was full of leaping lights and liquid shadows. Here, where the trees were not so

dense, the sunlight came through the waving branches in dazzling, quivering shafts; twilight alleys led the eye to open spaces, golden glimmers, and the misty white of the hawthorn-trees.

The place was a treasure-house of beauty, and we trampled the violets under foot.

"Run!" cried Eloise.

I chased her, lost her, found her again. I forgot my lameness, I forgot my guardian, the conveniences, and the fact that I was come to man's estate and carrying a heavy basket. The trees echoed with our laughter, till, tired out, panting, flushed, with her hat flung back and held to her neck only by the ribbon, Eloise sat down on a little carpet of violets and folded her hands in her lap.

"Listen!" said she, casting her eyes up to the trembling leaves above.

A squirrel, clinging to the bark of a tree near by, watched us with his bright eyes.

"Chuck-chuck." A bird on a branch overhead broke the silence, and, with a flutter of his wings, was gone. And now from far away, like the voice of Summer herself, filled with unutterable drowsiness and laziness and content, came the wood-dove's song to the mysterious Susie:

"Don't *cry* so, Susie—don't *cry* so, Susie—don't *cry* so, Susie—*don't!*"

"And listen!" said Eloise, when the wood-dove's song had been wiped away by silence and replaced by a "tap, tap, tap," far off, reiterated

and decided, curiously contrasting with the less businesslike sounds of the wood.

"That's a woodpecker," I said. "Isn't he going it? And listen! That's a jay."

Then the whole wood sang to the breeze that had suddenly freshened, the light flashed and danced through the dancing leaves, the trees for a moment seemed to shake off the indolence of summer, and the forest of Sénart spoke—spoke from its cavernous bosom, where the pine-trees spread the hollow ground, from the pools where the bulrushes whispered, from the beech-glades and the nut-groves. The oaks, old as the time of Charles IX., the willows of yesterday, the elms all a-drone with bees, and the poplars paling to the trumpet-call of the wind, all joined their voices in one divine chorus:

"I am the forest of Sénart, old as the history of France, yet young as the last green leaf that April has pinned to my robe. Rejoice with me, for the skies are blue again, the hawthorn blooms, the birds have found their nests, the old, old world is young once more. For it is May."

"It is May! it is May!" came the carol of the birds, freshening to life with the dying wind.

Then we went on our road, Eloise with her hands filled with freshly gathered violets.

I thought I knew the forest and the direction to take for the great pool; but we had not gone far when our path branched, and for my life I could not tell which to take.

The path to the left being the most alluring,

we took it ; and lo ! before we had gone very far, recollection woke up. This narrow path, twisting, turning, sometimes half obscured by the luxuriance of the undergrowth, was the path I had taken years ago—the path leading by the old-forgotten gravel-pit into which I had fallen, maiming myself for life ; the path along which I had followed the mysterious child so like little Carl.

Perhaps it was the old recollection, but the path for me had a sinister appearance ; something that was not good hung about it. Unconsciously I quickened my steps. I was walking in front ; and as we passed the spot where I had seen the child standing and looking back at me from amidst the bushes, Eloise laid her hand on my arm, as if for closer companionship.

“ I do not like it here,” said she. “ And I saw something—something moving in those bushes.”

“ Never mind,” I replied ; “ we will soon reach the open.”

When we did, and when we found ourselves in a broad drive which I remembered, and which led to the place I wanted, the sweat was thick on my brow ; and I determined that, go back how we might, I would never enter that path again. It had for me the charm and yet the horror that we only find associated in dreamland.

\* \* \* \* \*

The grand pool at last broke before us through

the trees—a great space of sapphire-coloured water, where the herons had their home, and the dragon-flies.

It was past noon. We were hungry, so we sat down on a grassy bank by the water, opened the basket, and, spreading the food on the grass between us, fell to.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### LA PÉROUSE

WE had finished our meal—simple enough, goodness knows. Our drink had been milk carried in one of those clear glass bottles used for vin de Grave, and the bottle lay on the grass beside us, an innocent witness of our temperance. We had finished, I say, and we were watching a moorhen with her convoy of chicks paddling on the deep-blue surface of the pond, when voices from amidst the trees drew our attention; and two stout men in undress livery, bearing a basket between them, came from beneath the shade of the elms, and straight towards us. After the men, and led by Madame Ancelot's little boy, came a party of ladies and gentlemen, amidst whom I recognised my guardian. The old gentleman, as though May had touched him with her magic wand, had discarded his ordinary sober attire, and was dressed in a suit of some light-coloured material, very elegant, and harmonising strangely well with the exquisite toilets of his companions. He wore a flower in his button-hole, and he was walking beside a girl whom I recognised at once as Amy Féraud. The two

other women I did not then know; but one of them, dark and beautiful, I afterwards discovered to be the famous model, La Pérouse. The two men who made up the party were peers of France; and if Beelzebub himself had suddenly broken from the trees I could not have been more disturbed than by this eruption of Paris into our innocent paradise.

In a flash I saw the whole thing. This was some move of my guardian. I had told Madame Ancelot that we would be by the grand pool, and Madame Ancelot's boy had led them.

But M. le Vicomte was much too astute an old gentleman for subterfuge, whatever his plan might be.

"Welcome!" he cried, when we were within speaking distance. "I have been searching for you. Ah, what a day! We have just come down from Paris on M. le Comte de ——'s drag. My ward, M. Patrique Mahon; M. le Comte de ——."

I bowed stiffly as he introduced me to the men.

"And mademoiselle?" asked the old gentleman, raising his hat and standing uncovered before Eloise.

But I had no need to introduce my companion. La Pérouse (oh, what a voice she had!—hard, metallic, shallow, low)—La Pérouse, with a little shriek of recognition, cried out, "Marie! Why, it is Marie!"

Then she kissed her, and I could have struck her on the beautiful mouth, whose voice was a voice of brass, for innocence told me she was bad, and part of Eloise's wretched past.



Ah, me! If an eclipse had come over the sun, the beauty of the day could not have been more spoilt, the loveliness of spring more ruined.

The stout servant-men, with the dexterity of conjurers, unpacked the great basket, spread a wide cloth, and, in a trice, a luncheon was spread out to which the Emperor himself might have sat down.

There was no resisting M. le Vicomte. We had to sit down with the rest, and make a pretence to eat.

But Eloise refused wine, as did I.

"Ma foi!" said La Pérouse. "What airs! Good champagne, too. Come, taste."

"Mademoiselle prefers water," I put in; and then, unwisely, "She is not accustomed to wine."

La Pérouse stared at me, champagne-glass in hand, and then broke out laughing. She was about to say something, but checked herself, and turned to the chicken on her plate.

But La Pérouse, as the champagne worked in her wits, returned to the subject of Eloise's abstinence.

In that dull brain was moving a resentment which the vulgar mind had not the power to repress.

"What! not drink champagne?" said the fool for the twentieth time. "Ah, well! It was different in the days of Changarnier. How is he, by the way, the brave Changarnier?"

I rose to my feet; and Eloise, as if moved by the same impulse, rose also.

"Mademoiselle," said I, as I offered Eloise my arm, "does not drink champagne. It is a matter of taste with her. Did she do so, however, I am very well assured that the evil spirit in it would never prompt her to talk and act like a fool!"

There was dead silence, as, with Eloise on my arm, I walked towards the trees. Then I heard the shrill laughter of the women; but I did not heed, for Eloise was weeping.

"Come," I said; "forget them."

"It is not they," replied Eloise. "I do not care about *them*."

I knew quite well what she meant. It was the past.

Do not for a moment confuse that word "past" with conscience. Whatever sin might have been committed by the world against Eloise Feliciani, she, at heart, was sinless. No; it was just the past, a blur of miasma from Paris, a breath of winter.

"Come," I said; "forget it. All that is a bad dream that you have dreamed; all those people, those women, those men, are not real—they are things in a nightmare; they have no souls, and when they die they go nowhere—they are just ugly pictures that God wipes off a slate. This is the real thing: these trees, these birds; and they are yours for ever. I give you them; they are the best gift that money can buy."

I wiped her eyes with my handkerchief. She smiled through her tears; and we pursued our way to the pavilion, followed by the rustle of the wind in the leaves, and the song of the wood-

doves—lazy, languorous, soothing—filled with the warmth and the softness of summer.

When I returned to Paris that night I sought for my guardian, and found him in the smoking-room.

Angry though I was with the trick he had played me, his manner was so bland and kind that I was at a loss how to begin. He it was, indeed, who began by complimenting the beauty of Eloise, her grace and her modesty. In fact, he had so much to say for her that I could not get in a word.

"All the same," finished he, "I do not quite see the future of this business. You offer Mademoiselle Feliciani a home; you provide for her; your intentions are absolutely honourable; yet you do not love her. That is all very well, mind you. It is somewhat strange in the eyes of the world, but I understand the position. You are a man of heart and honour, and she is, so to speak, an old friend; but what is to be the end of it?"

"I don't know," replied I.

"Just so. She is not a child. It is the nature of a woman to love, to enter into life. Picking daisies in the woods of Sénart may fill a summer morning, but not a woman's life. I am not entirely destitute of the gift of appreciation; the poetry of things is not yet dead for me; and I can see, my dear Patrique, the poetry of two young people, each half a child, playing at childhood. But the garment of a child, beautiful in itself, becomes ridiculous when you dress a man in it; impossible, in fact. In fact," finished the old

gentleman, suddenly dropping metaphor and using his stabbing spear, "you are getting yourself into a position that you cannot escape from with honour; for even if you wish you cannot marry this girl, for the simple reason that Paris would not receive her as your wife."

"I do not wish to marry Mademoiselle Feliciani," replied I, "nor does she dream of marrying me. I found her in wretchedness; I rescued her. I loved her as a friend. Have men and women no hearts but that they must sneer at what is natural and good? What is the barrier that divides a man from a woman so that comradeship seems impossible between them, simplicity, and all good feeling, including Christian charity?"

"Sex," replied M. le Vicomte de Chatellan.

## CHAPTER XXV

### FRANZIUS MEETS ELOISE

NEXT day, when I returned to the Pavilion of Saluce, I took a companion with me—Franzius.

I called early at his wretched lodging in the Rue Dijon. The sound of his violin led me upstairs, and I found him, seated on the side of his bed, playing, his soul in Germany or dreamland.

A day in the country, away from Paris, the houses, the streets! If I had offered him a day in Paradise the simple soul could not have expressed more delight.

"Well," I said, "it is nine o'clock. We will just have time to catch the train. Get ready and come on."

He took his hat from a shelf, placed it on his head, put his violin under his arm, and declared himself ready.

"But surely you are not taking your violin?"

"My violin—but why not?"

"Going into the country!"

"But why not? Ah, my friend, it never leaves me; without it I am not I. It is myself, my soul, my heart. Ach!"

"Come on—come on!" I said; laughing and

pushing him and his violin before me. "Take anything you like, so long as you are happy. That's right—mind the stairs. Don't you lock your door when you go out?"

"There is nothing to steal," replied Franzius simply.

In the street I hailed a fiacre and bundled the violinist in, protesting. The mad extravagance of the business shocked him. He had never been in a fiacre before; even omnibuses were luxuries to this son of St. Cecilia, who had tramped the continent of Europe on foot. Yet he wanted to pay when we reached the station; and the return ticket I bought for him pained his sense of independence so much that I took the fare from him. Then he was happy—happy as a child; and I do not know what the other passengers thought of the young beau, elegantly dressed, seated beside the shabby violinist, both happy, laughing, and in the highest of spirits—the violinist, unconsciously, now and then plucking pizzicato notes from the strings of his instrument, caressing it as a man caresses the woman he loves.

We walked from the station to Etiolles under the bright May morning, under the sparkling blue, along the delightful white dusty roads, the larks singing lustily, and the wind heavy with the hot-sweet scent of the hawthorn-blossoms.

Then, at the drawbridge over the moat, Eloise was waiting for us, and we followed her into the pavilion, Franzius with his hat crushed to his heart, bowing, the violin under his arm forgotten,

his whole simple soul worshipping, very evidently, the beautiful and gracious goddess who had received us.

Ah, that was the day of Franzius's life! We had déjeuner in the little garden, under the chestnut-tree just preparing to light its thousand clusters of pink blossom. He forgot his shyness completely, and told us stories of his wanderings, unconsciously dominating the conversation and leading us hundreds of miles away from Etiolles to the forests of the Roth Alps and the Hartz. The great forests of the Vosges, so soon to resound to the drums of war and the tramping of armies, spread their perfumed shade around us as we listened. Castle Nidek, whose ruined walls still echo to the ghostly hunting-horn of Sebalt Kraft; the Rhine and its storeyed hills; the white roads of Germany, Pirmasens; and the Swan Inn, with its rose-decked porch; mountain rivers, leaping waterfalls, skies turquoise-blue against the black-green armies of the high mountain pines;—all spread before us, lay around us, domed us in as he talked the morning into afternoon, and the afternoon half away.

What a gift of description was his; and how we listened as children may have listened to the story of the wanderings of Ulysses! Then, to forge his simple chains more completely, to give the last touch to his magic, he played to us—gipsy dances! And you could hear, as the smoke of the camp-fires blew across the figures of the dancers, the feet of the women and the men who had wandered all day keeping time on

the turf to the tune—a tune wild as the cry of the mountain kestrel, filled with all sorts of wandering undertones, heart-snatching subtleties.

Czardas and folk-airs he played, and the wonderful spinning-song of Oberthal, in which you can hear, through the drone of the wheel and the flying flax, the history of the poor—just a thread of song told by the thread of flax, the flax that forms the swaddling-clothes, the bridal linen, and the shroud of man. And, lastly, a tune of his own, more beautiful than any of the others.

“But why don’t you write music?” I said, when we were seated in the railway-train on our way back to Paris. “You are a greater musician than any of those men who are famous and rich.”

“My friend,” said Franzius, “I am the second violin at La Closerie de Lilas.”

It was the first time I had heard him speak at all bitterly, and I said no more. I did not approach the subject again, but that did not prevent me from making plans.

I would rescue this nightingale from its cage in a beer-garden and put it back in the woods; but the thing would require great tact and infinite discretion.

“Have you any music written out—you know what I mean, written out on paper—that I could show to a friend?” I asked him, as we parted at the station.

“I have several ‘Lieder,’” replied Franzius. “Very small—just, as you might say, snatches.”

“If I send a man for them to-morrow morning,



will you give them to him? I will take the greatest care of them."

"But they are so small!"

"Never mind—never mind! I have influence, and may get them published."

He promised. And I saw the light of a new hope in his face as he departed through the gaslit streets on foot—this child of the forest and the dawn, to whom God had given wings, and to whom the world had given a cage!

I went to the opera that night. It was "Don Giovanni"; and as I sat with all the splendour of the Second Empire around me, tier upon tier of beauty and magnificence drawn like gorgeous summer night-moths around the flame of Mozart's genius, the vision of Franzius wandering through the gaslit streets, with his violin under his arm, passed and repassed before me.

He seemed so far from this; his music, before this triumphant burst of song, so like the voice of a cicada, faint and thin, and of no account.

Yet, when I went to bed, the tune that pursued me from the day was the haunting spinning-song of Oberthal—the song so simple and full of fate, the song of the flax, caught and interpreted by the humming strings, telling the story of the cradle, the marriage-bed, and the grave!

I did not go to Etiolles next day, for I had business that detained me in Paris; but I went the day following, and Eloise received me, pouting.

"Ah well, wait!" said I, as I followed her into the pavilion. "Wait till I tell you what I have

been doing, and then you won't scold me for leaving you alone."

"Tell, then!" said Eloise, putting a bunch of violets in my coat, and pressing them flat with her little hand.

"I will tell you," said I, kissing the little violet-perfumed hand. And, sitting down, I told her of how I had asked Franzius to let me have his music.

"He sent me the three songs yesterday morning," I went on. "I cannot read music, though I love it; but that did not matter. I had my plan. I ordered the Vicomte's best carriage to the door, and drove to the Opera House, where I inquired of the doorkeeper the address of the best music-publisher in Paris. Flandrin of the Rue St. Honoré, it seems, is the best, so I drove there.

"It was a big shop. Flandrin sells pianos as well as songs. He is a big man, with a big, white, fat face with an expression like this." I puffed out my cheeks and opened my eyes wide to show Eloise what Flandrin was like. She laughed; and I went on: "He was very civil. He had seen me drive up to his door in a carriage and pair, and I suppose he thought I had come to buy a piano. When he heard my real business his manner changed. He said he was sick of musical geniuses; he would not even look at poor Franzius's 'Lieder.' 'Take them to Barthelmy,' he said. 'He lives in the Passage de l'Opéra! he publishes for those sort of people, and he is going bankrupt next week, so another genius won't do him any harm.' 'I haven't time

to go to Barthelmy,' I replied. 'Besides, I don't want you to buy these things—I want to buy them.'

" 'Well, my dear sir,' said Flandrin, 'if you want to buy them, why don't you buy them?'

" 'Just for this reason,' I replied. 'M. Franzius, who wrote these things, is not a shopman who sells pianos; he is a poet. He would be offended if I offered him money for his productions, for he would know that I did it for charity's sake. I want you to buy these things from him. I will give you the money to do so, and, by way of commission, I will buy a piano from you. My only condition is that you come with me now in my carriage and see M. Franzius, and pay him the money yourself. Of course, you will have to publish the things, too; but I will give you the money to do that as well. Here are a thousand francs, which you are to give M. Franzius. Send one of your pianos round to No. 14, Place Vendôme, M. le Vicomte de Chatellan's. And now, if you are ready, we will start.'

"He came like a lamb. The purchase of the piano had put him into a very good humour. He seemed to look upon the thing as a practical joke; and the idea of paying an unknown musician a thousand francs for three pieces of music seemed to tickle him immensely, for he kept repeating the sum over and chuckling to himself the whole way to the Rue Dijon.

"Franzius was in bed and asleep when we got there. I led Flandrin right up to the attic; and you may imagine Franzius's feelings when he

woke up and found us in his room—the best music-publisher in Paris standing at the foot of his bed waiting to offer him a thousand francs for his ‘Lieder’! A thousand francs down! Oh, there is nothing like money! It was just as if I had opened a window in his life and let in spring. I saw him grow younger under my eyes as he sat up in bed unconscious of everything but the great idea that luck had come at last and some hand had opened the door of his cage. Even old Flandrin was a bit moved, I think. Ah, well! I bundled Flandrin off when the business was done, and then I made Franzius write a note to the Closerie de Lilas people, telling them that at the end of the week he was leaving there; and then I told him my plan. You know old Fauchard the forest-keeper’s cottage? It’s only half a mile from here; it’s right in the forest. Well, he has a room to spare, and he will put Franzius up for twelve francs a week. He will be free to write his music——”

“Ah, Toto,” cried Eloise, who had been trying to get in a word for the last two minutes, “how good of you!”

“Good of me! Why, I have only done what pleased myself! It’s a debt. The man saved my life—but no matter about that. Get your hat and come with me, and we will go to Fauchard’s and make arrangements about the room.”

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE TURRET-ROOM

FAUCHARD the ranger's cottage lay at the meeting of two drives; all the trees here were pines, and the air was filled with their balsam.

It was, even in 1869, an old-fashioned cottage, set back in a clearing amidst the trees. The tall pines seemed to have stepped back to give it room, and were eternally bowing their compliments to it. Ah! they were fine fellows to live amongst, those pine-trees—true noblemen of the forest, erect as grenadiers, spruce, perfumed; and the blue sky looked never so beautiful as when seen over their tops.

The cottage had an old wooden gallery under the upper windows, and an outside staircase gone to decay; the porch was covered with rambler roses; on the apex of the red-tiled roof pigeons white as pearls sat in strings, fluttering now to the ground, and now circling in the blue above the trees like a ring of smoke.

It was a place wherein to taste the beauty of summer to the very dregs. Dawn, coming down the pine-set drive, touching the branches with her fingers and setting the woods a-shiver, peeped

into Fauchard's cottage as she never peeped into the Tuileries. Noon sat with folded hands before the rose-strewn porch, singing to herself a song which mortals heard in the croonings of the pigeons. Dusk set glow-worms, like little lamps, amidst the roses of the porch.

When we arrived, Fauchard was out, but his wife was in, and received us. Madame Fauchard was over seventy; a woman as clean and bright as a new pin, active as a cat; a woman who had brought twelve children into the world, yet had worked all her life as hard as a man.

Oh, yes! she would be very glad to take a lodger, if he would be satisfied with their simple place. She showed us over the little house. It smelt sweet as lavender, and the spare room was so close to the trees that the pine-branches almost brushed the window.

"It will be lovely for him," said Eloise, when, having settled about terms with Fauchard's wife, we were taking our way back to the pavilion. "But will he find it dull when he is not writing his music?"

"If he does," said I, "he can come over to the pavilion and see you. Then he will love Etiolles, where he will, no doubt, find friends; and he has the woods, and Fauchard will take him out with him. Oh, no; he will not find it dull."

"Toto," said Eloise, as though suddenly remembering something, just as we reached the drawbridge.

"Yes."

"You remember the day before yesterday you

said you would show me over the château the next time you came. Let us go over it now."

"Very well," I replied. "Wait for me here, and I will get the key."

The Château de Saluce had not been lived in for years—ever since my mother's death, in fact. But it had been well cared for. Fires had been lit every fortnight so as to air the rooms during the autumn and winter; and the gardens had been tended and looked after as though the family were in residence.

"When you marry," said my guardian, "it will make a very nice present for your wife. Let it! Good God, Patrique, are we shopkeepers?"

"Here's the key," said I, coming back to Eloise, who had waited for me at the angle of the drawbridge. She was standing with her elbow on the drawbridge rail, and her eyes fixed on the water. She seemed paler than when I had left her; and when I touched her arm she drew her gaze away from the water lingeringly, as if fascinated by something she had seen there.

"Toto," said Eloise, "are there fish in the moat?"

"I never heard of any. Why?"

"I saw something white and flat," said Eloise, "deep down. I first thought it was a flat-fish, then it looked like a ball of mist in the water deep down, and then it looked like a—a face."

"A face!" said I, laughing, and looking over the bridge-rail and down into the water.

"I know it was only fancy," said Eloise. "Perhaps I went asleep for a second and dreamed it. It felt like a dream, and I felt just as a person feels wakened up from sleep when you touched me on the arm just now. It was a man's face, pale, and—and—ah well, it was perhaps only my imagination!"

She shivered, and took my arm; and I led her along a by-path that took us to the carriage-drive and the front door of the château.

The great hall, with its oak gallery and ceiling painted by Boucher, echoed our footsteps and our voices.

This echo was the defect of the hall, as I have often heard my father say. The builder of the place had, by some mischance, imprisoned an echo. She was there, and nothing would dislodge her—everything had been tried. Architects from Paris had been consulted—even the great Violet Le Duc himself—without avail. She was there like a ghost, and nothing would drive her out. Whether she was hiding in the gallery or the coigns of the ceiling, who can say? But one thing was certain: her voice changed. It was sometimes louder, sometimes lower, sometimes harsher, sometimes sweeter; a change caused, I believe, by atmospheric influence. But superstition takes no account of atmospheric influence or natural causes. Superstition said that the echo was the voice of Marianne de Saluce, a girl famed for her beautiful voice, who, like Antonina in the Violon de Cremone, had died singing, under tragic circumstances, one



winter day here in the hall of the château, in the late years of the reign of his sun-like Majesty Louis XIV.

"The blood flowing from her mouth had mixed with her song," said the old chronicle; and this, with the fact that she was wild, wayward, and bad, gave superstition groundwork for a conceit not without charm.

"Marianne!" cried Eloise, when I had told her this tale; and "Marianne—Marianne!" the ghostly voice replied.

Eloise laughed, and Marianne laughed in reply all along the gallery, as though she were running from room to room; and, to my mind, made fanciful by the recollection of the old legend, it seemed that there was something sinister and sneering in the laughter of Marianne.

Then I called out myself, making my voice as deep as possible; and the answer was so horrible as to make us both start. For it was as though a woman, leaning over the gallery and imitating my man's voice, were mocking me.

I have never heard anything more hobgoblin, if I may use the expression.

"Ugh!" said Eloise. "Don't speak to her any more. Speak in whispers; don't give her the satisfaction of answering. Toto, are those men in armour your ancestors?"

"They are the shells of old Saluces," I replied. "Eloise, do you remember the man in armour in the tower of Lichtenberg—the one who struck the bell?"

"Don't speak of him," said Eloise—"at least,

here. The place is ghostly enough. Shall we go upstairs?"

We went up the broad staircase, peeped into the sitting-rooms and boudoirs of the first floor, and then up another flight of stairs to the floor of the bedrooms.

"See the funny little staircase?" said Eloise, when we had looked into the bedrooms, ghostly and deserted. She was pointing to a narrow staircase leading from the corridor we were in.

"Let's see where it goes," said I, for it was years since I had explored this part of the château. "It looks ugly and wicked enough to lead to a Blue Beard's chamber."

But it did not. It led to a turret-room, with four windows looking north, south, east, and west—a charming little room, with a painted ceiling, on which cupids disported themselves with doves.

Faded rose-coloured couches were placed at each window; on a table in the centre lay some old books, dust on their covers. The view was superb.

One window showed the forest, another the Seine winding blue through the country of spring, another the country of fields and gardens, vineyards, and far white roads.

The smoke of Etiolles made a wreath above the poplar-trees.

We sat down on a couch by the window overlooking Etiolles. We were so close together that I could feel the warmth of her arm against mine, and her hand hanging loose beside her

was so close to mine that I took it without thinking. The picture outside, the picture of Nature and the wind-blown trees over which the larks were carolling and the small white clouds drifting, contrasted strangely with the room we were in and the silence of the great empty house. The little hand lying in mine suddenly curled its little finger around my thumb.

"Eloise?" I said.

She turned her head—her breath, sweet and warm, met my face. Then I kissed her—not as a brother, but as a lover.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A BIRD SET FREE

AND I did not love her at all.

It was just as though the great tide of Nature had seized us, innocently floating, and flung us together, drifted us together for a little while, and then let us part; for we never referred to the matter again after that day.

But a cloud had arisen on my horizon, a cloud no larger than Eloise's hand.

I installed Franzius at Fauchard's cottage.

He brought his luggage with him, done up in a brown-paper parcel, under his right arm; under his left he carried his violin. I will never forget him that afternoon as he stepped from the train at the station, where Eloise and I were waiting to receive him. Such a Bohemian, bringing the very pavement of Paris with him, the music of Mirlitons, the gaslight of the Rue Coquenard, and the sawdust of La Closerie de Lilas.

Unhappy man! Paris had marked him for her own. Heaven itself could never entirely remove from his exterior the stains and the scorching, the lines around his eyes drawn during the

early hours in dancing-hall and café, the bruised look that poverty, hunger, and cold impress upon the servants who wait upon the Muses—the lower servants, whose place is the courtyard! But the stains and the scorching had not reached his soul; like Shadrach he had passed through the burning fiery furnace and come out a living man.

Besides his luggage and his violin he was carrying some rolls of music-paper.

We walked to the pavilion, and from there through the woods to Fauchard's cottage. The bees were working in the little garden, and the pearl-white pigeons were drawn up in parade order on the roof as if to receive us. Never seemed so loud the shouting and laughter of the birds, never so beautiful the rambler roses round the porch! The humble things of Nature seemed to have put themselves en fête to welcome back their own.

I did not go to Etiolles for some days after this. A new era of my life had begun.

And now it was that the truth of the Vicomte's philosophy was borne in upon me:

"You are getting yourself into a position from which you cannot escape with honour. You cannot marry Mademoiselle Feliciani, for Paris would not receive her as your wife."

What was I to do with her? Of course, a man of the world would have answered the question promptly; but I was not a man of the world. And the summer went on; and I was taken about to balls and fêtes by my guardian, and as I

was young, not bad-looking, and wealthy, I was well received.

The summer went on, the cuckoos hoarsened in the forest of Sénart, the splendour of Nature deepened, the corn in the fields was tall and yellow, the grapes in the vineyards full-globed, and the dragon-flies had attained the zenith of their magnificence, and all day mirrored themselves in the moat of the pavilion. Franzius, lost in his music and in the paradise in which he found himself, had got back years of his youth. His genius, clipped and held back, had suddenly burst into bloom. He was projecting and carrying out a great work—an opera founded on an old German legend, a Bohemian poet had written the libretto. Carvalho had inspected some of the scores, and had become enthusiastic. All was well with Franzius, but not with Eloise. As the summer went on she seemed to droop.

At first I thought it was only my fancy, but by the end of July I was certain.

Franzius was a frequent visitor at the pavilion. When he was there with us she seemed bright and gay, but when we found ourselves alone she grew abstracted and sad. Her cheeks had lost colour, and Madame Ancelot declared that she did not eat. The meaning of all this was plain—at least, I thought so—she cared for me.

This thought, which would have given a lover joy, filled me with deep sadness. I had offered and given the girl my protection, Heaven knows, from the highest motives. And now behold the imbroglio! If she cared for me, it was my duty

to marry her and give her a future. If I married her, society would not receive her as my wife. I had, in fact, in trying to make her future happy, gone a long way towards ruining my own. Heaven knows, if I had loved her, little I would have cared for society ; but the mischief and the misery of the thing was just that—I did not love her.

I felt a repulsion towards her whenever the idea of love came into my mind with her image. It was as if a man, who, tasting a fruit in a sudden fit of hunger and finding it nauseous and insipid, were suddenly condemned to eat of that fruit for ever after, and none other.

And I had the whole of life before me, and I would be tied to a woman all through life—to a woman I did not love ! And the worst part of the whole business was the fact that I could get out of the thing as easily as a man steps out of a cab—as easily as a man crushes a flower ! And that was what bound me.

To stay in the affair, to be made party to my own social ruin, was the most difficult business on earth.

Days of argument I spent with myself. The two terrible logicians that live in every man's brain fought it out ; there was no escaping from the conclusion : " If you have made this girl love you, you must ask her to be your wife, for under the guise of a brother's friendship you have treated her just as any of these boulevard sots and fools would have treated her. Oh, don't talk of Nature and sudden impulse—that is just

the argument they would use! You inspired love unpremeditatedly, we will admit. Well, you have your whole life to meditate over the reparation and to make it. Faults of this description are ugly toys made by stupidity, and they have to be paid for with either your happiness or your honour. Of course, you can treat her as your mistress; and she, poor child, tossed already about and bruised by the waves of chance, would be content. But would you? Would you be content to thrust still deeper in the mud of life this creature that fate has thrown on your hands? The powers of darkness have surely conspired against this unfortunate being. She, a daughter of the Felicianis, had been dragged in the mire of Paris. Would you be on the side of darkness, too?"

That was what my heart said against all the arguments of my head. And so it remained.

"To-morrow," said I, "I will go to Etiolles, and I will ask Eloise to be my wife."

That afternoon, walking in the Rue de Rivoli, I saw Franzius—Franzius, whom I imagined to be at Fauchard's cottage, green leagues away from Paris! He was walking rapidly. I had to run to catch him up; and when he turned his face I saw that he was in trouble. He was without his violin.

"Why, Franzius," I cried, "what are you doing here, and what ails you? Have you lost your violin?"

"Oh, my friend!" said Franzius. "What ails me? I am in trouble. No, I have not lost my



violin, I have forgotten it—it has ceased to be, for me. Ah, yes, there is no more music in life! The birds have ceased singing, the blue sky has gone—Germany calls me back.”

“Good heavens!” I said. “What’s the matter? You haven’t left Etiolles for good, have you?”

“Oh, no! I am going back for a few days. I came to Paris to-day to seek relief—to hear the streets—to forget——”

“To forget what? Come, tell me what has happened.”

“Not now,” said Franzius. “I cannot tell you now. To-morrow I will call on you at your house in the Place Vendôme. Then I will tell you.”

That was all I could get from him; and off he went, having first wrung both my hands, the tears running down his face so that the passers-by turned to look and wonder at him.

“Come early to-morrow,” I called out after him as he went.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE OLD COAT

NEXT morning I sent Joubert to my guardian's apartments with a message craving an interview.

It was nine o'clock, and the old gentleman received me in his dressing-room and in his dressing-gown. Beril had just shaved him, and he was examining his rubicund, jovial face in a hand mirror. The place smelt of Parma violets and shaving-soap. It was like the dressing-room of a duchess, so elaborate were the fittings, and so complex the manicure instruments and toilet arrangements set out on the dressing-table.

"Leave me, Beril," said the old gentleman, when he had made a little bow to my reflection in the big mirror facing him. Then, taking up a tooth instrument—for, like M. Chateaubriand, he kept on his toilet-table a set of dental instruments with which he doctored his own pearly teeth—he motioned me to take a seat and proceed.

"I have come this morning, monsieur, to place my position before you, and to tell you of a serious step in life which I have decided to take."

"Yes?" replied the Vicomte, tenderly tapping with the little steel instrument on a front tooth, as though he were questioning it as to its health.

"You told me once that I was getting myself into a difficult position. Well, as a matter of fact——"

"You have?"

"Yes, monsieur."

Then I told him everything.

When I had finished, the old gentleman put away the tooth instrument, folded his dressing-gown more closely round him, and examined contemplatively his hands, of which he was very proud.

"The only thing that would have surprised me," said he at last, "would have been if all this had not occurred. Well, now, let us make the best of it. We will assure her future, and she will forget."

"Monsieur, I am this morning about to offer Mademoiselle Feliciani my hand in marriage."

My guardian, who had been attending to his left-hand little finger with an ivory polisher, turned in his chair and looked at me. He saw I was in earnest. The blow was severe, yet his power of restraint was so great that his face did not alter.

Only the hand which held the ivory manicure instrument trembled slightly.

"You have decided on this step?"

"Absolutely, monsieur."

"You know, of course, it will mean your social

ruin, and, as you do not love the girl, the ruin of your happiness?"

"I am aware of all that, monsieur—bitterly."

My guardian sighed, rubbed his chin softly, and, for a moment, seemed plunged in a profound reverie.

"I am growing old," said he. "I have no children. I looked upon you almost as a child of mine. I made plans for your future—a magnificent future; I took pleasure to introduce you to my friends, in seeing you well dressed. With the Emperor at your right hand you would have made a very great figure in society, monsieur. Ah, yes, you might have been what you would! And now, in a moment, this has all vanished. Excuse me if I complain. Of course, as you are not of full age, I could compel you not to take this step. I could, as a matter of fact, sequester you; but I know your spirit, and I am not a believer in brute force. Well, well, what can I say? You come and tell me this thing—your suicide would sadden me less than this marriage, which will be your social death. You are a man, and it is not for me to treat you as though you were a child. Think once again on the matter, and then—why, then act as your will directs."

He rang the bell for Beril to complete his toilet, and I left the room smitten to the heart. His unaffected sadness, his kindness, his straightforwardness, would have moved me from my course if anything mortal could have done so.

Yet I left the room with my determination unshaken.

I was coming down the stairs when a footman accosted me on the first landing.

"A person has called to see you, monsieur, and I have shown him into the library."

I turned to the library, opened the door, and found myself engulfed in the arms of Franzius.

"Mind the violin—mind the violin!" I cried, for he was carrying it, and I felt the bridge snapping against my chest. Then I held him at arm's length.

He was radiant, laughing like a boy. He had come from Etiolles, all the way on foot, and all the joy that had been bottled up in him during the twenty-four miles' tramp had burst loose.

"And now," I said, laughing, too, from the infection of his gaiety, "what is it?"

"Oh, my friend," said Franzius, "she loves me!"

"Good heavens! Who?"

But you might just as well have questioned the Sud Express going full speed.

"Yesterday you saw me—I was in despair. I had not understood aright. She had not understood me. She thought I cared for nothing but my music; she did not know that my music was herself—that her soul had entered into me, that she was me——"

"But stay!" I cried, recalling to mind all the women at Etiolles, from Madame Fauchard to Elise, the station-master's pretty daughter—recalling to my mind all but the right one. "But stay!"

"That she was me, that my music was her

—that every strand of her golden hair, every motion of her lips, every——”

Ah, then it began to dawn on me!

“Franzius,” I cried, suddenly seizing him by the shoulders—“Franzius, is it Mademoiselle Eloise?”

“They call her that,” replied the stricken one, “but for me she is my soul.”

Then I embraced Franzius. It was the first time in my life that I had “embraced” a man French fashion. He and his old violin I took in my arms, nearly crushing them. Fool! fool! double fool that I was not to have seen it before! Her sadness when I was with her, the way she lighted up when he was near! And I had fancied that she was in love with me!

There was a grain of cynical bitterness in that recollection, but so small a grain that it was swallowed up, perished for ever, in the honest joy that filled my heart.

I had done the right thing, I had prepared to sacrifice myself, and this was my reward.

Then the recollection of the old man upstairs came to me, and, bidding Franzius to wait for me, I ran from the room. I saw a servant on the stairs and called to him to bring wine and cigars to the gentleman in the library; then, two steps at a time, up I went to the dressing-room.

I knocked and opened the door without waiting for a reply. Beril was tying my guardian's cravat. I took him by the shoulders and marched him out of the room.

"Saved!" cried I to the astonished Vicomte, as I stood with my back to the door and he stood opposite me, his striped satin cravat hanging loose and his hand half reaching for the bell.

Then I told him all, and he saw that I was not mad.

"Is he downstairs, this Monsieur Franzius?" asked my guardian, when I had finished my tale and he had finished congratulating me.

"Yes."

"I would like to see him. Ask him to déjeuner."

"He's rather — I mean, you know, he's a Bohemian, does not bother much about dress and that sort of thing; so you must not expect to see a boulevardier."

"My dear sir," said the old man, with delightful gaiety, "if one is in a burning building, does one trouble about the colour of the fire-escape that saves one from destruction, or if it has been new painted? Ask him to déjeuner, though he came dressed as a Red Indian!"

Franzius, when I found him in the library, would not touch the wine or cigars I had ordered up; he was in a frame of mind far above such earthly things. I made him sit down, and, taking a seat opposite to him, listened while he told me the whole affair.

He declared that the idea of love for Eloise had never come to him of itself: he was far too humble to worship her, except as one worships the sun. It was his music that said to him: "She loves you, and you love her. Listen to

me: Am I not beautiful? I am the child of your soul and hers; divine love has brought you together so that you might create me. I will exist for ever, for I am the child of two immortal souls."

"Then my friend," said Franzius, "I knew what love was—it is the birth of music in the heart, it is the music itself; the little birds try to tell us this. I had loved her without knowing from the first day; and when knowledge came to me I was still dumb—dumb as a miser who speaks not of his gold; till yesterday, when I told her all. She cried out and ran from me, and hid herself in the house, and I thought she was offended. I thought she did not love me, I thought the music had lied to me, and that there was no God, that the flowers were fiends in disguise, the sun a goblin. I came to Paris, I walked here and there, I met you, my distress was great. Then I returned to Etioilles. It was evening, towards sunset, and, coming through the wood near the pavilion, I saw her.

"She had taken her seat on the root of an old tree; her basket of needlework was by her side, and in her lap was an old coat; she had made me bring it to the pavilion some days before, saying she would mend it. I thought she had forgotten it, but now it was in her lap; her needle was in her hand, and she had just finished mending a rent in the sleeve. Then she held it up as if to see were there any more to be done; then—she kissed it."

"So that——"



"Ah, my friend, all is right with me now. I have come home to the home that has been waiting for me all these weary years. Often when I have looked back at my wanderings I have said to myself, Why? It all seemed so useless and leading nowhere—such a zigzag road here and there across Europe on foot, poor as ever when the year was done. *But now I see that every footstep of that journey was a footstep nearer to her, and I praise God.*"

He ceased, and I bowed my head. The holy spirit of Love seemed present in that room, and I dared not break the sacred silence with words.

It was broken by the opening of the door, and the cheery voice of M. le Vicomte bidding me introduce him to my friend.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### IN THE SUNK GARDEN

I SHALL never forget that déjeuner, and the kindness of my guardian to poor Franzius. The tall footmen who served us may have wondered at the very unaccustomed guest; but, had the Emperor been sitting in Franzius's place, M. le Vicomte could not have laid himself out more to please. And from no hidden motive. Franzius was his guest, he had invited him to déjeuner, he saw the Bohemian was ill at ease in his strange surroundings, and with exquisite delicacy only attainable by a man of good birth, trained in all the subtleties of life, he set himself the task of setting his guest at ease.

When the meal was over, we went into the smoking-room; and then, and only then, did M. le Vicomte refer to the question of Eloise in a few well-chosen words.

Then he dismissed us as though we were schoolboys; and I took the musician off to see my apartments.

Now, I am Irish, or at least three parts Irish, and I suppose that accounts for some eccentricities in my conduct of affairs. I am sure

that it accounts for the fact that my joy up to this had carried me along so irresistibly and so pleasantly that I had not once looked back.

It was when I opened the door of my sitting-room that memory, or perhaps conscience, woke up to deal my happiness a blow.

The man beside me knew nothing of Eloise's past. Or did he?

"Never," I thought, as I looked at him. "His happiness is new-born; it has been stained by no cloud. She has told him nothing."

I sat down and watched him as he roamed about the room, examining the works of art, the pictures, and the hundred-and-one things, pretty or quaint; costly toys for the grown-up.

I sat and watched him.

An overmastering impulse came upon me to go at once to Etiolles, see Eloise, and speak to her alone, if possible.

"Come," I said, "let us go down to the pavilion. I want a breath of country air. Paris is smothering me. Shall we start?"

He went to the library to fetch his violin, and we left the house.

We took the train. It was a glorious September day; they were carting the corn at Etiolles; and the country, warm and mellow from the long, hot summer, was covered by the faintest haze, a gauze of heat that paled the horizon, making a diaphanous film from which the sky rose in a dome of perfect blue.

The little gardens by the way were filled with autumn flowers — stocks and hollyhocks and

Michaelmas daisies—simple and old-fashioned flowers, great bouquets with which God fills the hands of the poor, more beautiful than all the treasures of Parma and Bordighera.

A child of six, a son of one of the railway porters, bound also for Etioilles on a message, tramped with us. Franzius carried him on his shoulder part of the way, and bought him sweets at the village shop.

Eloise was not at the pavilion. Madame Ancelot said she had taken her sewing and was in the sunk garden of the château, and there we sought for her. This garden, small and protected from the east wind by a palisaded screen, was the prettiest place imaginable. It was at the back of the château, and steps from it led up to the rose-garden. It had in its centre a square marble pond from which a Triton blew thin jets of water for ever at the sky.

Eloise was seated on a small grassy bank ; her work-basket was beside her, and she was engaged in some needlework which she held in her lap.

She made a pretty picture against the hollyhocks which lined the bank ; and prettier still she looked when, hearing our footsteps, she cast her work aside and ran to meet us.

With a swift glance at Franzius she ran straight to me and took both my hands in hers.

"He has told you?" said she, looking up full and straight into my face, full and straight, with perfect candour and firm eyes more liquid and beautiful than the blue of heaven washed by the early dawn.

"He has told me," I replied, holding her hands in mine.

All the sadness and pain that my recollection of her past had caused me were now banished, for I could read in her eyes that the past was for her not in the new world in which she found herself.

We sat down on the little grassy bank, and talked things over, the three of us. Three people who had found a treasure could not have been more happily jubilant as we talked of the future.

"And you know," said I, "you will never want money. Franzius will be rich with his music; and, even should he never care to write again, I have a large sum of money in trust for you. Oh, don't ask who gave it in trust for you both! It is there."

We talked till the dusk fell and star after star came out.

So dark was it when I left that a tiny point of light in Eloise's hair made me hold her head close to look. It was a glow-worm that had fallen from the bending hollyhocks.

It seemed to me like a little star that God had placed there as a portent of fortune and happiness.

When I got back to Paris my guardian was out.

I went to my rooms to think things over. My thoughts had received a new orientation. I remembered my delight that morning on finding myself free—free of all that heaven!

Ah, if I could only have loved her as Franzius did!

What, then, was this thing called love, which I had never known, the thing which I had never guessed till to-day, till this evening, there in the sunk garden of Saluce, in the dusk so filled with the sound of unseen wings and the music of an unknown tongue?

Some drawing-things were lying on the table.

I have always been a fair artist, and sketching has been one of my few amusements.

Almost mechanically I took a pencil, and tried to sketch the face of Eloise Feliciani.

But it was not the face of Eloise Feliciani that appeared on the paper. I gazed on it, when it was finished, in troubled amazement. It was the face of a woman—yet it was also the portrait of a child. Ah, yes; beyond any doubt of memory it was the face of Margaret von Lichtenberg, the old portrait in the gallery of Schloss Lichtenberg! Yet it was the face, also, of little Carl!

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## CHAPTER XXX

### THE MARRIAGE OF ELOISE

"WE will give them a good send-off," said my guardian, as, some days later, we discussed the matter of Eloise's wedding. "Let them be married at Etiolles; have the village en fête. I will settle for it all."

The proposition seemed good; nowhere could one find a more suitable spot for such a wedding than the little church of Etiolles; yet it met with opposition.

Franzius was not a man to forget his friends. He had many in the Latin Quarter, and he was a peasant born, with a peasant's instincts. Birth, marriage, and death, those three supreme events in the life of man, are more insistent in their ceremonial amidst the poor than the rich. To Franzius it would have been a strange thing to marry without inviting to the ceremony the people who were his friends; and the journey to Etiolles would be too far for some of these.

Then, it was impossible for the marriage to be solemnised in a church, for the simple reason that he was a Lutheran and Eloise had been born a Catholic. So it was arranged to take

place on the first of October at the mairie of the quarter which includes the Rue Dijon.

It was to be quite a simple affair, a wedding such as takes place every day amongst the bourgeoisie, with the additional lustre that the presence of the Vicomte Armand de Chatellan would lend to the proceedings.

It was a lovely day. It had rained during the night, but the morning broke nearly cloudless, and there was that feeling of spring in the air, that freshness which comes sometimes in autumn like the reminiscence of May.

Franzius had slept the night at the Place Vendôme; and I must say, dressed in a brand-new suit of clothes and with a flower in his buttonhole, he never looked worse in his life. Dressed in his old clothes, with his violin under his arm, he was picturesque; but now he looked like a tailor out for a holiday, and I told him so, to keep up his spirits, as we breakfasted hurriedly and without appetite, but with a good deal of gaiety.

Eloise was to come from Saluce in one of the Vicomte's carriages, and he was to accompany her to the Mairie, where we were to wait for them. Noon was the hour of the ceremony; and when we arrived at the Mairie the place was crowded: four other couples, it seemed, were to be united that day, and we were third on the list.

The people whom Franzius had invited were there already: not many—scarcely a dozen—and mostly men, musicians with long hair and German



accents; his landlady of the Rue Dijon and her daughter, a cripple dressed for the occasion in a newly starched white frock and blue sash; and a young lady of the sempstress type, pale-faced and modest, and seeming dazed with the grandeur of the officials in their chains and all the paraphernalia of the law.

For a moment a pang went to my heart to think that a daughter of the Felicianis was to be married here amidst these folks like one of them. But it soon passed. The Archbishop of Paris, the choir of Notre Dame, the congregated aristocracy of France, could not have added one whit to the beauty of the marriage or to its sanctity.

I had dreaded that in the fulness of his heart and his simplicity Franzius might have invited undesirable guests. The vision of Changarnier appearing like an evil beast had horrified me. But my fears were set at rest. Leave the simple-hearted alone, and they rarely make mistakes. Franzius's guests, humble though they might be, were of the aristocracy of the poor—good, kind-hearted, and honest people.

At ten minutes to noon the Vicomte arrived, with Eloise on his arm. How charming she looked, in that simple, old-fashioned wedding-gown which she had made for herself! And how charming the Vicomte was, insisting on being introduced to every one, chatting, laughing, immeasurably above every one else, yet suffusing the wedding-party with his own grace and greatness so that every one felt elevated instead of dwarfed!

And I could not then determine in my mind whether it was natural goodness, or just gentility polished to its keenest edge, that made this old libertine so lovable.

After the ceremony, carriages conveyed the wedding-party to the Café Royal in the Boulevard St. Michel.

The Vicomte had, through Beril, made all arrangements; and in a room flower-decked, and filled with the sunlight and sounds of the boulevard, we sat down to déjeuner.

Scarcely had we begun than the waiters announced two gentlemen, at the same time handing the Vicomte de Chatellan two cards.

"Show them up," said my guardian, "and lay two more covers."

It was the great Carvalho, who, hearing indirectly from my guardian of the marriage, had come, bringing with him the director of the Opera.

You may be sure we made room for them. And what a good omen it seemed—better than a flight of white doves—these two well-fed, prosperous, commonplace individuals, who held the music of France in their hands, and the laurel-wreaths!

They did not stay long, just long enough to pay their compliments and drink success to the bride and bridegroom.

Just before departing, Carvalho whispered to me: "His opera is accepted. He will hear officially to-morrow. It will be produced in April, or, at latest, May."



## PART III



## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE BALL

"By the way," said my guardian, "how are you off for money?"

We were driving back from the station, having seen the newly married couple off on their honeymoon.

"Oh, pretty well," I replied. "Why do you ask?"

He did not seem to hear my reply, but sat gazing out of the carriage window at the streets we were passing through, and the people, gazing at them contemplatively and from Olympian heights, after the fashion of a god gazing upon beetles.

When we reached the Place Vendôme, he drew me into the library.

"I have been on the point of speaking to you several times lately about money," said he—"not about personal expenses, but about the bulk of your fortune. It is invested in French securities. Clement, our lawyer, has the number and names of them. They are all good securities, paying good dividends; they are the securities in

which I myself have invested my money. Well, I am selling out——”

“I beg your pardon, monsieur?”

“Selling out—realising. I am collecting my money, marshalling my francs, and marching them out of France into England. I propose to do the same with yours.”

“But,” said I, “is that safe, to have all our money in a foreign country? Suppose there should be war?”

The Vicomte laughed.

“You have said the words. Suppose there should be war? France would be smashed like a ball of glass—ouf. Do you think I am blind? At the Tuileries, at the Quai d’Orsay, they speak of M. le Vicomte de Chatellan as a very nice man, perhaps, but out of date—out of date; at the embassies it is the same—out of date. Meanwhile, I know the machine. I have counted the batteries of artillery and the regiments of the line on paper, and I have counted them in the field, and contrasted the difference. Not that I care a halfpenny for the things in themselves, but they are the protectors of my money; and as such I look after them. I have reviewed the personality of the people at the Tuileries—not that I care a halfpenny for their psychological details, but they are the stewards of my money; and I examine their physiognomies and their lives to see if they are worthy of trust. I look at society—not that I care a halfpenny for the morals of society, but because the health of society is essential to the health of the State.

Now, what do I see? I speak not from any moral standpoint, but just as a man speaks who is anxious about the safety of his money. What do I see? Widespread corruption; speculators hiding speculators—from the man who hides the rotten army contract at the Ministry of War to the man who hides the rottenness of the fodder in the barrack-stable. Widespread corruption; Ministers the servants of vice, each duller than Jocrisse; marshals as wooden and as useless as their bâtons; skeleton regiments, batteries without cannon, cannon without horses; no esprit; an army of gamins with cigarette-stained fingers and guns in their hands."

The old gentleman, who for seventeen years or so had been in a state of chronic irritation with the Second Empire and its makers, paused in his peregrinations up and down the room, and snapped his fingers. I sat listening in astonishment, for to me, who only saw the varnish and the glitter, France seemed triumphant amongst the nations as the Athene of the Parthenon amongst statues; and the French Army, from the Cent Gardes at the Tuileries to the drummer-boy of the last line regiment, the ne plus ultra of efficacy, splendour, and strength.

He went on:

"Tell me: when you see a house in disorder, bills unpaid, the servants liars and rogues, inefficient and useless, dust swept under the beds, and nothing clean about the place except perhaps the windows and the door-handle—whom do you accuse but the master and the mistress. A nation



is a house, and France is a nation. I say no more. I have been a guest at the Tuileries; and it is not for me, who have partaken of their hospitality, to speak against the rulers of France. But I will not allow them to play ducks and drakes with my money. In short, my friend, in my opinion my money is no longer safe in France, and I am going to move it to a place of safety! I have been uneasy for some time, but of late I am not uneasy—I am frightened. *I smell disaster.*"

He did.

Now, in October, 1869, from evidence in my possession, the fate of France was already definitely fixed. Bismarck had decided on war. He had not the slightest enmity towards France, nothing but contempt for her and for the wretched marionettes playing at Royalty in the Tuileries. He was assisting at the birth of the great German Empire, that giant who in a short twelve months was to leap living and armed from the womb of Time. The destruction of France was the surgical operation necessary for the birth—that was all. In October, 1869, the last preparations were being made.

My guardian knew nothing of this; yet that extraordinary man had already scented the coming ruin, guessing from the corruption around him the birds of prey beyond the frontier.

"Thank you!" said he, when I had given him permission to deal with my fortune as his judgment dictated. "And now you have just time to dress for dinner. Remember, you are to accom-

pany me to-night to the ball at the Marquis d'Harmoville's."

I went off to my own rooms not overjoyed. Society functions never appealed to me, and balls were my detestation, for then my lameness was brought into evidence. Condemned not to dance, it was bitter to see other young people enjoying themselves, and to have to stand by and watch them, pretending to oneself not to care. My lameness, though I have dwelt little upon it, was the bane of my life. I fancied that every one noticed it, and either pitied me or ridiculed me. It was a bitter thing, tainting all my early manhood; it made me avoid young people, and people of the opposite sex. I have seen girls looking at me, and have put their regard down to ridicule or pity—fool that I was!

Joubert put out my evening clothes. Joubert of late had grown more testy than ever, and more domineering. He spent his life in incessant warfare with Beril, the factotum of my guardian; and the extra acidity that he could not vent on Beril he served up to me. But it was the business of Eloise and Franzius ("that lot," as he called them) which he had now, to use a vulgar expression, in his nose.

"Not those boots," said I, as he took a pair of patent-leather boots from their resting place. "Dancing shoes!"

"Dancing shoes!" said Joubert, putting the boots back. "Ah, yes, I forgot that monsieur was a dancer."

"You forgot no such thing, for you know very

well I do not dance, but one does not go to a ball in patent-leather boots. You like to fling my lameness in my face. You are turning into vinegar these times. I will pension you, and send you off to the country to live, if M. le Vicomte does not do what he has threatened to do."

"And what may that be?" asked the old fellow, with the impudent air of a naughty child.

"He says he'll put you and Beril in a sack and drop you in the Seine, if he has any more trouble with the pair of you—always fighting like a couple of old cats."

"Old, indeed!" replied Joubert. "Ma foi! it well becomes a young man like the Vicomte to talk of age! And did I make you lame? more likely it was a curse from one of that lot——"

"Here!" I said, "give me the hair-brushes, and leave 'that lot,' as you call them, alone."

I wondered to myself what Joubert would have said had he known the real cause of my lameness, but I had never spoken to any one of the child, black haired like little Carl, the mysterious child who had lured me through the bushes into the hidden gravel-pit. If I had, what ammunition it would have given him against "that lot," as he was pleased to call any one who had been present at the Schloss Lichtenberg that September nine years ago!

I dined tête-à-tête with my guardian, then we played a game of écarté; and at ten o'clock, the

carriage being at the door, we departed for the Marquis d'Harmonville's in the Avenue Malakoff.

It was a very big affair ; the Avenue Malakoff was lined with carriages, and we, wedged between the carriage of the Countess de Pourtalès and that of the Russian Ambassador, had time on our hands, during which the Vicomte, irritated by the loss of five louis at *écarté* and the slowness of the queue, continued his strictures on the social life of Paris and the condition of France.

We passed up the stairs, between a double bank of flowers ; and, despite the condition of the social life of Paris and the state of France, the scene was very lovely.

The great ballroom—with its scheme of white and gold, its crystal candelabra and its extraordinarily beautiful ceiling, in which, as in a snowstorm, the ice spirits whirled in a fantastic dance—might have been the ballroom in the palace of the Ice Queen but for the warmth, the banks of white camellias, and the music of M. Strauss's band.

Following my usual custom, I cast round for some one whom I could bore with my conversation, a fellow-wallflower ; and it was not long before I lit on M. de Préssensé, a friend of my guardian, one of those old gentlemen who go everywhere, know everything, talk to everybody, and from whom every one tries to escape. Delighted to obtain a willing listener, M. de Préssensé, who did not dance, drew me into a

corner and pointed out the notabilities, and presently, when M. de Préssensé was engaged in conversation with a lady of his acquaintance, I stood alone and looked at the assembled guests.

Recalling them now, and recalling the Vicomte's strictures, it seems strange enough that amidst the guests were most of those who, fatuously playing into Bismarck's hands, brought war and the destruction of war on France; all, nearly, of the undertakers of the Second Empire's funeral were there. The Duc d'Agénor de Gramont; Benedetti, who happened to be in Paris at that time; Marshal Leboeuf, that ruinous fool the clap of whose portfolio cast on the council table at Saint-Cloud was answered by the mobilisation of the German Army; Vareigne, the Palace Prefect of the Tuileries; and, to complete the collection, Baron Jérôme David, destined to be the first recipient of the news of Sedan.

I was looking on and listening, amused and interested by old M. de Préssensé's descriptions, that were not destitute of barbs and points, when through the crowd in my direction, walking beside my old enemy the Comte de Coigny, came a young man—a young man, pale, very handsome, with an air of distinction which marked him at once as a person above other people, a distinction which, starlike, reduced the surrounding crowd to the level of wax-lights, and the function of D'Harmonville to a bourgeois rout. He was dressed in simple evening attire, without jewellery or adornment of any

description, except an order set in brilliants, a point of sparkling light which gave the last touch to a picture worthy of the brush of Vandyck or Velasquez.

"Quick!" I said, plucking old M. de Préssensé by the sleeve. "That young man with the Comte de Coigny: who is he?"

"That!—ma foi—he is Baron Carl von Lichtenberg, the new attaché at the Prussian Embassy. Oh, yes; he is the sensation of the moment in Paris. The women rave about him——"

But I did not hear what more the old man may have said, for at that moment, Von Lichtenberg, as they called him, looking in my direction, caught my eye and halted dead, with his hand on De Coigny's arm.

He seemed stricken with paralysis; the words he had just been saying to his companion withered on his lips; we stared at each other for ten seconds; then De Coigny, glancing in my direction, broke the spell; and, pulling old Préssensé by the arm, I retired precipitately through an alcove which led to the card-room.

I was terrified, shocked. Terrified as an animal which suddenly finds itself trapped in a gin; shocked as a man who sees a ghost.

All the nameless excitement and soul-terror that had filled me for a moment as a child when Gretel, in the gallery of the schloss, had held the light to the portrait of Margaret von Lichtenberg, were mine now again, for the face

I had just seen was hers. The Baron Carl von Lichtenberg—was he little Carl?

This thought filled me with horror—the horror of the unknown. The terrors of the bell tower, of the killing of Vogel, of the duel in the forest, all rushed upon me from the past, all found a common voice crying to me, “Begone!—save yourself whilst there is yet time!”

I said “Good evening,” to M. Préssensé, escaped through the card-room door, got my hat and coat from the attendants, and found myself in the street.

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## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE MEETING

I WALKED fast, as one who would try to escape from his fate.

I *could* not but see the cards being dealt by some mysterious hand; I could not but remember that Von Lichtenberg, a nobleman, a man of honour, the friend of his King, and presumably sane, had three times attempted my assassination when I was a child, to shield little Carl from some terrible evil at my hands; and look, to-night, whom had I met?

Then, Franzius entering my life as he had done, and Eloise, like the people on the stage who are seen in the first act of the drama, to reappear in the last act, helping to form the tragic tableau on which the curtain falls.

But the terror and repulsion in my mind rose not from these things: it came like a breath from afar, it came like a breath from the unknown, from the time remote in the past when lived Margaret von Lichtenberg, the woman murdered by her lover.



I walked hurriedly, not caring whither I went; the sounds and lights of Paris surrounded me, but my spirit was not there. It was in the gardens of Lichtenberg, walking with Eloise and little Carl; it was in the picture-gallery, gazing at the portrait of the dead-and-gone Margaret, beneath which was the little portrait of Philippe de Saluce, so horribly like myself; it was in the windy bell-tower where the Man in Armour stood with his iron hammer before the iron bell; I saw again the duel in the forest, and Von Lichtenberg lying in the arms of General Hahn, and I heard again the slobbering of the torches, the wind in the pine-trees, and the far-off barking of the fox in the wood.

Ah, yes; all that might have something to do with me, but beyond all that I refused my fate. I refused to believe that the dead Margaret had a hold upon me—the last of the Mahons, who was also the last of the Saluces. This I refused; this I would not listen to; this I abhorred, as a whisper from the devil, as a blasphemy against God's goodness and against life.

"I have never done harm to any man!"

"Or woman?" queried the whisperer, whose voice seemed my own voice, just as in that story of Edgar Poe's the voice of William Wilson found an echo in his double.

"Or woman?—a moment of passion——"

"A moment of passion murdered Margaret de Saluce."

"But God is good; He does not create to

torture; He does not bring the dead back to confront them with their crimes."

"Know you that there is a God?" replied the whisperer. "And not a fate working inexorably and by law?"

"Cease!" I replied. "Let there be a fate. I am a living man with a will. No dead fate working by law shall drag me against my will, or move me to another purpose than my own. I will not—I will not!"

This mental dialogue had brought me a long way. I was called to my senses by a bright light illuminating what seemed a river of blood stretching across the pavement.

It was a red carpet, and the great house from whose door it was laid down was the Prussian Embassy.

A carriage, flanked by a squadron of Cent Gardes, was at the pavement, and a man was leaving the Embassy.

It was Napoleon, who had been dining privately with the Prussian Ambassador. He was in evening dress, covered by a dark overcoat; his hat-brim was over his eyes, and he held a cigarette between his lips. When Napoleon wore his hat in this fashion, with the brim covering his eyes like a penthouse, the whole figure of the man became sinister and full of fate.

I would sooner a flock of black birds had crossed my path than that mysterious figure in the broad-brimmed, tall hat, beneath which, in the darkness, the profile showed vaguely, yet distinctly, like the profile on some time-battered coin of

Imperial Rome, some coin on which the Imperial face alone remains, asking the dweller in a new age, "Who is this?"

I watched him getting into his carriage and the carriage driving away surrounded by the glittering sabres of the Cent Gardes; then I returned home.

This, it will be remembered, was the night of the first of October.

. . . . .

On the fourth of October, three days after, I was sitting at my club, reading a newspaper, when the Comte de Brissac proposed a game of *écarté*.

I take cards seriously; the gain or loss of money is nothing to me beside the gain or loss of the game. That is why, perhaps, I am often successful.

There were several other players in the room, and a good many loungers looking on at the games, several around our table, of whom I did not take the slightest notice, so immersed was I in the play.

I lost. Never had I such bad luck. The cards declared themselves against me; some evil influence was at work. At the end of half an hour, during a pause in the game, and after having lost a good sum of money to De Brissac, I looked up, and for the first time noticed the people around us. Right opposite to me, standing behind De Brissac, and looking me full in the face, was Baron Carl von Lichtenberg.

The surprising thing was that I was not surprised. My unconscious self seemed to have recognised the fact that he was there all the time, whilst the conscious self was sublimely indifferent to everything but the cards.

Then I did just what I would have done had a cry of "Fire!" been raised—cast my cards on the table, and left the room, walking hurriedly, but not so hurriedly as to express what the old Marquis d'Ampreville once described as ungentlemanly alarm.

Now, Lichtenberg was not a member of the club; and as I was a pretty regular frequenter of the place during certain hours of the day, and as he had taken his place at the card-table at which I was playing, the suggestion became almost a certainty that he had come there to meet me.

"I am a living man with a will. No dead Fate working by law shall drag me against my will or move me to another purpose than my own." I had said that on the night of the first of October. Well, there was something more than a dead Fate here, a thing working by law. There was the will of Von Lichtenberg; and as I walked down the Boulevard des Italiens, away from the club, the gin seemed to have closed more tightly around me.

It is unpleasant to feel, not that you are going to meet your fate, but that your fate is coming to meet you; to swim from a danger, yet find the tide slowly and remorselessly driving you towards it.

Now, what was this danger I dreaded? Impossible to say; but I felt surely in my soul that far more destructive to my happiness and my life than Vogel, or the fantastic old woman who lived in the wood and made whistles of glass, silver, and gold, for children to play upon, was this man Carl von Lichtenberg. That, just as Eloise had brought me the flowers of childhood perfumed and dew-wet in her hands, Carl von Lichtenberg was bringing me flowers from an unknown land, flowers scentless as immortelles, sorrowful as death.

Why should I, young, and happy, and rich, with all the joy of life in me, with a clear conscience and a healthy mind—why should I be troubled by the tragic and the fateful? As day by day men turn the pages of their life-story, men ask of God this question, receiving only the Author's reply: "Read on."

The next day I had the extra knowledge that not only was Von Lichtenberg's will against me, but the tattle of fools.

The affair at the Club had been talked about. The loungers about the card-table had seen me look up, stare at the Baron, fling my cards down, and leave the room.

I had, it seemed, put a public affront on him.

My guardian told me of the talk.

"Paris is a whispering gallery," said the old gentleman, "filled with fools. They put the thing down to the fact of the duel between your father and Baron Imhoff. The whole thing is

unfortunate; the relations of the Saluces and the Lichtenbergs have always been unfortunate; yet the two families have had an attraction for each other, to judge by the intermarriages. Still, this young Baron Carl seems quite a nice person, a nobleman of the old type, a man of distinction and presence——”

“You have met him?”

“I was introduced at D’Harmonville’s ball. Yes—quite a nobleman of the old school; and it seems a pity that you should bear him any grudge on account of the unfortunate fact that Baron Imhoff——”

“I don’t. I don’t hold him responsible for the fact that Baron Imhoff killed my father. I have no grudge against him.”

“I am glad to hear that,” said the Vicomte; and two days later he invited Von Lichtenberg to dinner to meet me!

I did not come to that dinner. I was a living man with a will of my own. (How that phrase haunts me like satiric laughter!) I would pursue my own course; and no dead Fate would drag me against my will, or move me to another purpose except my own.

I dined at the Café de Paris with a friend; and, as I was coming away, whom should I meet but my old enemy the Comte de Coigny!

This gentleman was flushed with wine; he was descending the stairs with two ladies, and when he saw me he started. We had not spoken for years, yet he came forward to introduce himself.

When we had exchanged a few platitudes, he turned to the matter that was evidently the motive-power of his civility.

"I am surprised to see you here to-night," said he, "for my friend M. le Baron von Lichtenberg told me he was to dine with you."

"He told you wrong."

"Ah! just so. I thought there was some mistake; he would scarcely be dining with you after the affair at the Club."

"M. de Coigny," I replied, "I know of nothing that gives you the warrant to introduce yourself into my private affairs. I dine where I choose, do what I please; and should any one question my actions they do so at their own peril."

Then I turned on my heel and left the café with my friend.

"Another man would send you his seconds in reply to that," said my friend.

"And why not De Coigny?"

"Oh, he is a coward. But he is also a bad man. Be on your guard, for he will try to do you an evil turn."

I laughed, and told him of the occurrence when, years ago, I had made De Coigny's nose to bleed in the gardens of the Hôtel de Morny.

"All the same," replied he, "be on your guard."

Next day I had a very unpleasant interview with my guardian. I had not only insulted Von Lichtenberg, it seems, but I had also hit the

convenances a foul blow. Hit them below the belt, in fact.

"Ah, yes," said the old gentleman, "I try to do the best for you, and see your return! In my own house, too! And to receive the message that you were dining out only an hour before he was expected, giving me no time to make excuses!"

"What did he say?" I asked.

"Say!" burst out M. le Vicomte. "He said nothing. Ah, if I had been in his place! But no. He only looked sad and depressed. Had he been a girl instead of a man, a girl in love with you, monsieur, he could not have taken the matter with more quietness or with more sad restraint. Say! Ah, yes, I will tell you what he said—what we said. I will give you the dialogue:

"‘I had hoped to meet some one else.’ That was what he said.

"And I: ‘Alas! monsieur, Fate has ordained us to a solitude à deux.’

"I did not mention your name, monsieur, for in mentioning your name I would have mentioned a person who had disgraced me."

"Very well," said I. "I will disgrace you no longer. I will leave Paris to-morrow, and go to Nice."

This determination I carried out next day.

Now, under the tragic cloak of the story, under all these evasions of mine and this pursuit of Von Lichtenberg, there lay a lovely comedy, of which I, one of the chief actors, was utterly



ignorant of the motive and the extraordinary dénouement. But this, if you have not guessed it, you will see presently.

I went to Nice. I had never been South before ; I had never seen the white, white roads, the black shadows, the green olives, the leaping palms ; I had never seen the oranges growing like dim golden lamps amidst the glossy green leaves ; and it seemed to me that I had never seen the blue of sky or the blue of sea before I entered that paradise.

It is all changed now. The Avenue de la Gare from a road in heaven has become a street in a town ; vulgarity and wealth have done their work ; and to-day you may buy a diamond necklace of M. Marx, where, in 1869, under a plane-tree, sat the old woman who sold peeled oranges for a sou a dozen.

I spent the winter at Nice, finding plenty of amusement and friends, and cutting myself off completely from Paris, communicating only with my guardian and with Franzius and his wife, who were living at the pavilion.

The fourth of April was the date for the production of his opera, "Undine." It was based on De la Motte Fouqué's lovely tale ; and its success, as far as I could learn from Carvalho, was assured, for one can say of certain artistic productions, just as one can say of sunlight or pure gold : "This is assured. Let the tastes or the fashions alter, this will always be reckoned at its full value, a treasure indestructible."

I had fixed to return to Paris on the thirtieth of March, but I came back sooner ; for on the fifteenth of March, driving on the Promenade des Anglais, I passed a carriage in which were seated the Comte de Coigny and the Baron Carl von Lichtenberg.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE OVERTURE TO "UNDINE"

It was the morning of the day of "Undine's" production. I had ridden over to the pavilion from Paris to breakfast with Franzius and Eloise.

The rehearsals had almost wrecked Franzius, but he was all right now: the ship was built; only the launching remained. As for Eloise, in six months she had altered subtly yet marvelously. I had last seen her a girl in her bridal dress; she was now a woman, for in six months she had aged years, without gaining a wrinkle or losing a trace of the beauty of youth. Marriage had ripened her; her every movement was marked by that self-contained grace which comes from maturity of mind; the wild beauty of spring had vanished, giving place to the full beauty of summer—the grace of Demeter gazing upon the fields of immortal wheat.

It was the wish of both my guardian and myself that Franzius and Eloise should inhabit the pavilion as much as they chose. We had offered the place to them, indeed, as a wedding gift, but the permission to live there was all they would take.

This morning we breakfasted with the windows open. The swallows had not come back, yet the wind that puffed the chintz curtains was warm as the wind of May. Its sound amidst the trees was like the sound of April walking in the woods.

We came out and walked to the cottage of old Fauchard, whose wife was ill. Eloise had made her some soup, and she carried it in one of those tins the workmen use for their food.

The birds were calling to each other from tree to tree; clumps of violets were showing their blue amidst the brown of last autumn's fallen leaves, and the forest, half fledged, was breathing in the delicious breeze, sighing and shivering under the kiss of April.

It was no poetic fancy that presence which we felt around us, that call to which every fibre of my being responded. It was very real, and reaching far. The swallows were listening to it away at Luxor and Carnac; it touched the sun-baked Pyramids and the reeds of the Mareotid lakes, that call from the green fields of France—fields that in a few short months were to be ploughed by the cannon and watered with blood and tears.

We came to Paris in the afternoon, and, leaving Eloise with the Vicomte at the Place Vendôme, I accompanied Franzius to the Opera House, where he had some business to transact.

The last rehearsal had taken place the day before, and the huge building seemed very grim, empty and deserted as it was.

"Franzius," I said, as we stood looking at the empty orchestra, "do you remember that night in the Schloss Lichtenberg when you and Marx and the rest of your band played in the great hall, and a child in his nightshirt peeped at you from the gallery?"

"My friend," replied Franzius, "do I remember? Ach Gott! but for that night I would never have met you, I would never have met Eloise, I would be now second violin at the Closerie de Lilas, a man without love and without a future. It is to you I owe all."

"Not a bit. It is to chance. And if it comes to that, it is to you I owe all. But for you I would have been killed that night in my sleep. You remember the hunting-song that held me—you gave me the words of it last autumn. I wish some time you would write out the music for me."

Franzius smiled; then, as if speaking with an effort:

"It was to have been a surprise. I have written out the music of it for you; it is in the score of the opera; it forms part of the overture."

I have never felt more excited than I felt that night. Despite the assurance of Carvalho, I felt that the fate of my friend was hanging in the balance; and I am sure I felt far more nervous than he, for he seemed quite calm and certain of success.

We dined early, and he departed before us, for he was to conduct.

We arrived before the house was half filled, and took our places in M. le Vicomte's box, which was situated in the first tier. Then the flood-gates of the world where all the inhabitants are wealthy slowly opened; box after box became a galaxy of stars; diamonds, ribbons, and orders reflected the brilliant light which flooded the house, fans fluttered like gorgeous butterflies, and the house, no longer half deserted, became a scene of splendour filled with the perfume of flowers, the intoxication of brilliancy; and my heart leapt to think of Franzius as I had met him that night in the Boul' Miche, going along in his old threadbare coat, with his violin under his arm, poor, unfriended, and unknown, and to think of him now, like a magician, compelling the wealth and beauty of Europe to his will!

Ah, yes! there is something in genius after all, something in it, if it is not trampled to death by fools before it has time to expand its wings.

The Empress was unable to attend, but the Emperor was there; and in the box with him were the Duc de Gramont and the Duc de Bassano. The Faubourg St. Germain was there, and the Chaussée d'Antin, old nobility and new, at daggers drawn, yet brought under the same roof by Art.

There was an electrical feeling in the place, a something I could not describe, till the Vicomte de Chatellan gave it a name.

"Success is in the air!" said he; then it

seemed to me that I could hear her wings, that glorious goddess more beautiful than the Athene of the Parthenon.

And now from the orchestra came the complaint of the violin-strings, proclaiming their readiness, and the deep, gasping grunts of the 'cellos, saying as plainly as 'cellos could speak: "Begin! begin!" And there was Franzius, in correct evening attire (how different from the long coat of the Schloss Lichtenberg!), and I was swept right back to the gallery overlooking the hall; and it seemed to me that I was standing once more in my nightshirt, looking down at the guests, at General Hahn, and my father, and the Countess Feliciani; at Major von der Goltz, at the jägers crowding to the doorway, and then—three taps of the conductor's magic bâton; and with the first bars of the overture, Spring, who had been walking all day in the forest of Sénart, Spring herself entered the Opera House; the rush of the wind over leagues of blowing trees swept Paris and the glittering ceiling away; and the jewels and decorations, the Faubourg St. Germain and the Chaussée d'Antin, became trash under the blue of immortal skies.

"All things bright and all things fair," sang the music, flowing and beautiful, gemmed with star-like points of song. The skylark called from the seventh heaven, and the wind and the rivers, the echoes of the hills, the shepherd's song and the bells of sheep, the dim blue violets and dancing daffodils made answer, heaven echoing earth, earth heaven, till, deepening and changing, as a

landscape stained with cloud shadows, the music became overcast as if by the shadow of that tragic figure Man—Man, for whom Spring is everything, and for whom Spring cares not at all; Man, who gives a soul to Nature as her mortal lover gave a soul to Undine; Man, who pursues a shadow for ever, even as the mysterious hunters in the hunting-song pursued the shadow-stag.

Hound and horn give voice and tongue,  
 Fill the woods with music gay;  
 Let your echoes sweet be flung  
 To the Brocken far away.

Yes; there it was, the song that seemed woven in the texture of my life; and as I sat, holding Eloise's hand and listening, it seemed to me that the overture of "Undine" was in some way connected with the story of my life, so gay and joyous in the opening bars, deepening now and shadowed by Fate.

There it was, the horn and the echoes of the horn leading the shadowy dogs and the ghostly huntsmen. In pursuit of a shadow. Whither?

That was the last mysterious message of the overture, in whose last bars, sublime and peaceful, lay spread the mysterious country where all hunting ceases, recalling from the loveliest of poems that country where Orion, the hunter of the shadowy stag, possessed of Merope, dwells with her in a remote and dense grove of cedars for ever and happily, whilst the tamed shadow-stag drinks for ever at the stream.



The shadow of a stag stoops to the stream,  
Swift rolling toward the cataract, and drinks deeply,  
Throughout the day unceasingly it drinks,  
And when the sun hath vanished utterly,  
Arm over arm the cedars spread their shade  
Above that shadowy stag whose antlers still  
Hang o'er the stream.

. . . . .

When the curtain fell on the first act of "Undine," the opera was already a success.

"Ah, yes," said M. le Vicomte, "that is music. Beside it, the drumming and trumpeting of Wagner sound like the noise of a village fair." Then, turning to Eloise: "My congratulations." Then he left the box, to talk to friends and take his share in the incipient triumph.

It was really a triumph for him. He had boasted at the clubs of the new musician he had discovered; and it was a supreme satisfaction to him that his diamond had not turned out to be a piece of glass.

"Eloise," said I, "it is a success already; and if I had written ten thousand operas of my own, and they had all been successful on the same night, I would not feel the pleasure I feel now. Dear old Franzius——"

As if the name had called for an answer, a light knock came to the door of the box. The door opened, and Baron Carl von Lichtenberg stood before me. M. le Duc de Choiseul and the Marquis de Mérode, two well-known boulevardiers, stood behind him.

"Monsieur," said Von Lichtenberg, advancing towards me, "I have sought you in many places

without avail since the incident which occurred at your Club, on the first of October last. I sought you to pay you this compliment." And he flicked me on the shoulder with the white glove which he had drawn from his hand.

I bowed, and he withdrew.

That was all. A deadly insult, very nicely wrapped up, lay in "this compliment"—and he had struck me.

Ah, well! it was to be. Although I was a living man with a will of my own, it seemed that my will could not prevent my meeting Von Lichtenberg; and, to point the matter, the challenge would have to come from me. I could not escape. Heaven knows I have a sufficiency of animal courage, yet for a moment the thought came to me of leaving Paris and ignoring the insult, sacrificing honour and name rather than to submit to the unknown destination towards which Fate was driving me. Some instinct told me that this duel would have consequences far beyond what I could imagine; that it was a turning-point in my life, having passed which my fate would be irremediably fixed.

Only for a moment came the suicidal thought of flight, to be immediately dismissed. Let come what might, it was not my fault. I would send my seconds to Von Lichtenberg in the morning. Then I turned to Eloise, and found her leaning against the side of the box, pale, and seemingly in a fainting state.

"I am all right," she murmured, "but, oh, Toto, it was his face!"

"His face?"

"His face I saw deep down in the water of the moat, drowned, and with the weeds floating across it."

I remembered that day when, leaning on the drawbridge rail, and looking down into the moat water, she had seen what seemed a face.

"Eloise," I said, taking her hands in mine, "come to yourself. The second act is about to begin. Do not let other people see you pale like this. What matters it? He and I have an account to settle: what matters it? You have Franzius to think of. Listen to me. Do you know who he is? He is Baron Carl von Lichtenberg—he was little Carl. Do you remember the gardens of Lichtenberg and the drum, and how we marched away into the forest——"

And before Eloise could answer, the Vicomte returned, and the curtain rose on the forest of the lovely land where Undine met her lover.

The opera was a great success. Not since the marvellous first night of "The Barber of Seville" had Paris shown such enthusiasm. But the pleasure was dimmed for me, and I saw everything at a distance.

During the interval between the second and third acts, I sent a message to De Brissac and another friend who were in the house, to meet me at the Place Vendôme that night; and towards one in the morning we met in my apartments, and I gave them their commission.

Then I went to bed and to sleep, with the music of "Undine" ringing in my ears, and in

my heart the knowledge of Franzius's triumph, and the knowledge that I had helped him to it.

At eleven o'clock next morning De Brissac was announced.

Von Lichtenberg had accepted my challenge, with an extraordinary proviso: the duel was not to take place till that day three months.

"He will fight you to-day if you press the point," said De Brissac, "but he asked me to lay before you the fact that he will require three months in which to arrange his affairs, which are partly political. He added," continued De Brissac grimly, "that, as you have evaded him for three months and more, you cannot in courtesy refuse him this favour."

"I accept. So he added that—another insult!"

"He is a strange person," said De Brissac, "though in all outward respects a perfect nobleman. He is a strange person, and I do not care for him. In my eyes this is a forced business—une mauvaise querelle."

"There have been several duels to the death between our houses," replied I. "Well, let it be so. On the fifth of July we shall meet."

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## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE RAT

ON the afternoon of the same day upon which I sent him my seconds, Baron Carl von Lichtenberg left Paris. So quietly had the whole affair been transacted at the Opera that not till noon the following day did my guardian hear of it.

He was rather pleased at first. In those days a young man could not have been said to make his *début* till he had proved his courage. Besides, my supposed insult to the Baron had been much talked about; and the affair between us, to use the Vicomte's expression, was like an abscess that required opening.

But when he heard of the three months' condition he was less pleased.

"Why three months?" said he. "In Heaven's name, are not forty-eight hours enough for any man in which to put his house in order! What business can he possibly be about which requires three months to attend to? I don't like the look of this," he finished. "The Lichtenbergs are a mad race. But as you have accepted the condition you must abide by it."

How widely the old gentleman would have

opened his eyes had he known then the reason why Baron Carl von Lichtenberg required three months in which to put his house in order before the duel! But he knew as little as I of the mysterious event towards which I was being driven—I, a living man, with a will of my own.

I had fully made up my mind that death lay before me. Swords were the weapons chosen by Von Lichtenberg, and I was an expert swordsman, but my sword would never pierce Carl von Lichtenberg. Of that I was determined.

The old fatality which had attended the relationship of the Lichtenbergs and the Saluces was coming to a head. Yes; I was condemned to fight, but Fate could not condemn me to kill.

I preferred to be the victim, and for this I was prepared; nay, I felt almost certain that I should remain on the ground—and all through that summer the thought filled me with a vague melancholy, a mist that made the landscape of life more beautiful, its distances and its beauties more grand, its trivialities more futile.

Only when we come near the end do we see life as it is, and things in their just proportions. I had seen the splendour of society, the pomp of Royalty, and that thing men call the glory of the world. Did I regret to leave all this? It never even entered into my consideration. It was nothing to me—nothing beside the passionate appeal of summer, the cry of life that came from all things bright and all things fair; from the

roses of Saluce, from the trees of the forest, and the birds I loved.

Ah! that glorious summer! Etiolles was a fire of roses, and the deep, dark heart of the forest a furnace of life. The bees in the limes and the wind in the beech-trees, the chirrup and buzz of a million happy insects, filled the air with a ferment of sound, whilst in the open spaces the pools lay blue as turquoises under the vast blue dome of sky.

I spent most of my time with Franzius and Eloise. We would take our food with us, and spend long days exploring the forest, which, like some mysterious house, had ever some new room to be discovered, some passage which was not there yesterday, some window opened by fairies during the night, and giving upon a new and magic prospect.

They knew nothing of my impending encounter, nothing of the mystery that surrounded me. Happy in their love, they did not guess my sadness, and I, though their happiness filled me with pleasure, could not in the least grasp it. Never having loved, I could not see the paradise which surrounded them.

The blindest people on earth are the people who have never loved, the people who have not yet lived.

But I could not see the paradise that surrounded them; and so the summer passed on, and June drew near July.

Every few days I would go to Paris, moved by an unrest for which I could not account.

One day—it was the twenty-sixth of June—I had just reached the Place Vendôme, when Beril informed me that my guardian wished to see me.

I found the old gentleman in his dressing-gown, sorting and arranging papers.

“I am leaving Paris,” said M. le Vicomte, “for my estates in Auvergne, where I have to put some things in order. From there I am starting on a visit to England.”

“To England! Why?”

“My doctor has ordered me rosbif,” replied the old gentleman. Then, rising, he opened the door of the room suddenly, and looked out.

“Beril has the habit of applying his ear to keyholes,” he explained. “No, my dear Patrique; it is not the state of my health that is moving me to this journey, but the state of France. You know the story of the rats and the sinking ship?”

“Yes.”

“Well, call me a rat.”

He went on sorting his papers.

“Now,” he continued, “here is a list of the shares in which I have invested your money. All good, solid English securities. Take it. Our lawyer has all the bonds and scrip. I am taking them with me to England. My address will be Long’s Hotel, in Bond Street, London. What do you propose to do? Follow me there, or remain in France?”

“First of all,” I replied, “why are you going like this? Nothing is threatening France——”

“Oho!” said my guardian. “And where have



you been studying politics? Down amongst the rabbits at Saluce?"

"I read the papers."

"Just so, and I read the times. I have been reading them for fifty-seven years. But that is not all. Patrique, do you know that we have a mysterious friend, who interests himself in our affairs?"

"I was unaware of the fact."

"Well, the fact remains. Now, what I am going to tell you is very secret. I cannot even give you the name of our informant, as I am pledged to an oath of secrecy. But the news has come to me through the German Foreign Office. News has come to me that France is in vital danger." He rose, trembling with excitement. "News has come to me that a thunderbolt is going to fall on France, not from heaven, but from there—from there! from there!" He almost shouted the words, pointing with a shaking finger in a direction which I took to indicate Germany.

I have never seen anything more dramatic than the Vicomte's gesture—the shaking hand, the intense expression, the fire in his old eyes, as he stood with one hand grasping the dressing-gown about him, as a Roman might have grasped his toga, the other pointing to the visionary enemy.

Then he sank back in his chair.

"Well," I said, "if danger is threatening France, I remain."

"That is as you please," replied he. "I go."

"But why go so soon? Surely you might wait till events are more assured?"

"Yes," replied he, "and then they would say I had run away. As it is, I do not run away. I simply depart before the event."

"But morally——"

"There are no morals in politics."

The terrible old man was certainly right in that.

I now see what he foresaw. Not only was France not fit for war, but Paris was not fit to meet defeat. He foresaw it all: the Commune, houses torn to pieces, the Column Vendôme lying on the ground, the muffled drums, the firing-parties, the trenches filled with dead. He foresaw it all, yet made one great mistake. He imagined the whole of France to be as rotten as Paris. But then he was a boulevardier, and for him Paris was France.

"Well," I said, "I am not a politician, so the morals of politics do not affect me. France has been my mother: if she is threatened by calamity, I will remain with her. I have eaten her bread; my father and my grandfather fought in her wars; every penny I possess comes to me from her; and were I to leave her now I would feel dishonoured. Besides, I have business to attend to. You remember the appointment I have to meet on the fifth of July."

I really believe the old gentleman had quite forgotten about the duel.

"Ah!" said he. "Lichtenberg." And he struck his knee with his fist. Then he got up

and paced the room in deep thought. Then, turning to me, he smiled.

"Yes," he said, "I had forgotten. This affair will keep you in Paris; but when it is over, please to remember my advice and my address in England."

"When it is over," replied I, "I may be dead."

"Oh, no," said the Vicomte; "you will not be dead. At least"—and here he smiled again—"not in my opinion."

## CHAPTER XXXV

### PREPARATIONS FOR THE DUEL

HE departed for Auvergne next day, he and Beril, and a pile of luggage. A number of people saw him off from the station.

They did not see a rat leaving a sinking ship : they saw an old gentleman, with a cigar in his mouth, entering a first-class carriage, a nobleman departing to visit his estates. He was to be back in a month, so he said ; and the last I saw of him was a jovial red face, and a hand waving a copy of the *Charivari* to the little crowd of friends he had left on the platform.

There was a touch of humour in that ; and I could not help laughing, as I turned home, at this man, so great in some ways, so little in others, so kind, so heartless, so bad, so good ; and such a perfect "shuffler." He was by nature, above all things, an escaper from difficulties. I could not help remembering how he had shuffled out of the painful duty of breaking the news of my father's death to me ; how he had shuffled out of the responsibility of my education and bringing up ; a hundred other instances occurred to me, leading up to this last business of shuffling out of France

at the first scent of disaster. I am nearly sure that had he been with the army he would have found some means of shuffling it out of the trap at Sedan ; at all events, I am perfectly certain he would have escaped himself.

I returned to the Place Vendôme and the dullness of an empty house.

And day followed day, till the fourth of July broke over Paris, cloudless and perfect.

I was up early, and at ten o'clock I called upon De Brissac at his rooms, in the Rue Helder.

"Ah!" said he, "I'm glad to see you."

"How so?" replied I, for his manner indicated something more than an ordinary greeting.

"Well, as a matter of fact," replied he, "I heard last night—in fact, it was generally spoken of on the boulevards—that you had arranged the matter amicably with the Baron von Lichtenberg."

"That I had arranged the matter?"

"People say you have apologised to him."

"I apologise? Why, my dear sir, it was he who insulted me! He struck me on the shoulder with his glove. How, then, could I apologise?"

"Not for that, but for the occurrence at the Club. So it is a canard?"

"The wildest."

"Ah, I thought so. And I think I know who set it flying—De Coigny."

"I would not be surprised ; he is an old enemy of mine."

"I am certain of it," said De Brissac. "For M. de Champfleury, who is acting with me also as your second, told me that the report

came to a friend of his from the mouth of M. de Coigny."

"De Brissac," I said, "bring with you another friend—some one not indisposed to De Coigny—to-morrow."

"Why?"

"M. de Coigny——"

Then I stopped, for the determination I had come to was of such a nature that I thought it best to leave the declaration of it till we were on the ground."

"Why?" asked again De Brissac.

"Oh, just as a spectator. It will be worth his while, for, if I mistake not, there will be something worth seeing to-morrow morning at seven o'clock in the Avenue des Veuves, just by the pond, for that is, I believe, our place of meeting."

De Brissac bowed.

"I will bring a friend," said he.

Little did I think of the surprising thing that friend would see; and little did De Brissac dream that the duel in which he was to take part would be noticeable above all other duels in the history of duelling even unto this day."

"Till to-morrow, at seven, then," said I.

"Till to-morrow," replied De Brissac.

Then I took my departure.

The Vicomte, before starting on his visit to Auvergne, had cleared his money and his property out of Paris as far as possible, but he had left the hôtel in the Place Vendôme "all standing," as the sailors say. To have removed his furniture, his

horses, and his equipages would have been to declare his hand.

So I had a stable full of horses at my disposal, and a house full of servants; all the bills were paid; there was unlimited credit, and I had ten thousand francs in my pocket-book, which he had left with me in case of eventualities.

I returned from De Brissac's to the Place Vendôme, ordered out a britzka and a pair of swift horses, and told the coachman to take me to Etiolles.

I wished to shake hands with Franzius and kiss Eloise again. I had also determined to tell them of what was to happen on the morrow.

We passed through Bercy, and retook the same road I had taken that morning in May when I had gone down to make arrangements for Eloise's reception at the pavilion. It was the same road, but dressed now in the glory of summer.

Heavens! when I think of that road, so peaceful, the houses wearing such a contented look, the flowers in the garden, the little children playing on the doorsteps; that road so soon to resound to the tramp of the German hordes, and the drums of war, the rolling of artillery and baggage-waggons—when I think of that scene of peace and what followed!

And now it is all so far away, so many summers have re-dressed that road again; and what of it all remains? Only an old story with which Father Mabœuf bores the drinkers at the Grape Inn, of Etiolles; a tale which old men in Germany

tell the grandchildren ; a song or two. Scarcely that.

When I reached the pavilion, Franzius and Eloise were not there. Madame Ancelot said they had taken money and food with them, and "gone off." They often did this, sometimes for a couple of days. This strange pair, who were now more than ever like lovers, would "go off," spend days in the open, and stop at village inns at night. Franzius had infected his companion with the love of freedom. He was now famous. Another man in his position would have been at Homburg or Trouville, basking in the social sun, but the only sun desired by Franzius was the sun of heaven. He refused to be lionised. A Bohemian to the ends of his fingers, a gipsy to the soles of his boots, brown as a berry with the sun and open air, carrying his violin under his arm : had you met him on a country road, you would never have suspected him to be Franzius, the composer of "Undine," who, had he chosen, could, with a few sweeps of his bow on a concert platform, have gained two thousand francs on a summer's afternoon.

"They did not say when they would be back?"

"No," replied Madame Ancelot; "but they won't be back to-day, or maybe to-morrow: they took a ham with them."

"Ah!"

"And a chicken. It was in a basket that madame carried. They went away through the woods, but that leads everywhere; and one can't



say whether they passed last night at some cottage. For myself, I believe they sometimes sleep in the woods, and don't trouble about houses at all."

I had myself suspected the Franziuses of sleeping on occasion in barns and hayricks, but I said nothing. I was depressed at not finding the two people I loved most on earth, for it was now quite beyond chance that I would meet them before to-morrow morning; and, after to-morrow morning— Ah, well—after to-morrow morning—

I left the pavilion and walked into the château gardens. These gardens, beloved by Eloise, kept our house in the Place Vendôme supplied with flowers. They were very old. M. de Sartines and M. de Maupeou had walked here amidst the roses, discussing State intrigues; the full skirts of the Duchesse de Gramont had swept that lawn; and on that stone seat, under the great fig-trees' cave-like shelter, the Princesse de Gueménée had sat amidst brocaded cushions, and there had received the news of the Duc de Choiseul's disgrace; and far beyond that went the history of these walks, these lawns, these fountains playing in the sun; these old, old walls, warmed by the suns of two hundred summers—rich red walls, moss-lined, to which the peach-trees still clung as they had clung when La Vallière was still a girl, when La Fontaine was still a man, and Monsieur Fouquet held his court at Vaux.

No poet has written such lovely things as Time

had written here in those three lovely books—the rose garden, the sunk garden, and the Dutch garden of Saluce; books whose leaves in summer were ever being turned over by the idle fingers of the wind. Years of desolation had completed their charm, just as years of death the charm of some vanished poet's works.

Peopled with ghosts and flowers, voices of fountains and voices of birds, walking there alone on a summer's day one would scarcely have dared to call out, lest some silvery voice made answer, or some white hand from amidst the rose-bushes—some hand once whiter than the white rose, some voice once sweeter than the voices of the birds.

"And Marion de l'Orme, how is she—the Austrian, and she whom they call the Flower of Light? Diane de Christeuil, Colombe de Gaillefontaine, Aloise de Gondelaurier, sweet-named ghosts: where are ye?"

"Who knows?" would reply the breeze in the rose-bushes; "they are here—they are here," the birds in the trees.

Here had walked, in times long past, the ladies of the house of Saluce. This family, from which I drew half my being, had for me a charm and mystery beyond expression. I was a Mahon; all my traditions were Irish; yet I was linked with this family, of whom all were dead, this family whose stately history went back into the remote past

I had never seen my mother; I had never seen a living Saluce; they were all vanished. Nothing

remained but their pictures and their names, yet I had come from them in part. They were my ancestors, and my likeness had walked the earth, in the form of Philippe de Saluce, long years before I was born; and my likeness, in the form of Philippe de Saluce, had—— We know what he had done.

The doors of the château were open, and some workmen were busy in the hall, repairing the oakwork. They were talking and laughing, and their voices had set the echoes chattering in the gallery above.

Marianne seemed mocking them; and as I gave them "Good day!" and examined their work, her voice seemed mocking mine.

Then I left the men, and came upstairs to look at the place once again. I passed from corridor to corridor, and at last found the turret-room whither I had come that day with Eloise.

It was just the same, everything in exactly the same place, even to the books on the table. I examined them: some were quite modern, drawings by Gavarni, and De Musset's poems; some were more antique.

Amongst them was a work in gilded boards, the history of the Saluce family, written by one Armand de Saluce, in the year 1820, and dedicated rather fulsomely to the then head of the house.

He was some poor relation evidently, Armand, and his language was very flowery; and from his little book one might have imagined the Saluces a family of saints and lambs. I turned the pages

this way and that, till I found what he had to say about Philippe.

Philippe de Saluce, according to Armand, had died in consequence of an unfortunate love-affair. It did not say he had drowned his fiancée—that he was a murderer.

With the book in my hand I fell asleep, lulled by the drowsy warmth of the room, and the softness of the cushions of the window-seat. When I awoke, the light had changed, and, looking at my watch, I found it to be nearly six o'clock. I rose, put the book on the table, and came downstairs.

The workmen had gone, and they had locked the door!

Not for a few moments did my position realise itself to me. Every door I knew to be barred and locked; every window was also barred on the ground floor, except those that were too narrow for a man's entry or exit. No one would come till the morning. Madame Ancelot would think I had returned to Paris by train, and send the carriage back. I was trapped in the Château of Saluce; and at seven o'clock to-morrow I had to meet Von Lichtenberg, or be dishonoured for life! A nice situation, truly!

I laughed out loud from pure rage and vexation, and the echo above returned my laughter mockingly.

In my despair I tried all the doors, uselessly; they were solid as the doors of the Bastille. Then I remembered a window that was not barred—the stained-glass window of the ban-

queting-room. It was fifteen feet from the ground, but had it been more I would have risked it.

I went to the banqueting-room, and stood before the window, my only way to freedom and honour. It was a lovely creation of stained glass. The arms of the Saluces and the arms of the noble families with whom they were connected stood there, the Lichtenbergs amidst the rest. The evening light, shining through the stained glass, repeated the colours vaguely upon the polished parquet of the floor. The light, shining through the tender colours of the glass, brought with it an indefinable sadness. To break this thing would be like striking the dead, dishonouring the past—an act of vandalism beyond name.

This window was more than a window : it was a barrier between me and my fate. The arms of the Lichtenbergs, the Saluces, the Montmorencies, had drawn themselves up before me ; it was as if they would stand between me and the encounter of the morrow, but only as a menace. They could offer no real opposition to my physical acts ; they could only say, "Take warning !"

Then, with the brutality of your kind-hearted man, who, condemned to kill an animal, and loathing the business, strikes fiercely and blindly, causing more destruction than necessary, I seized a heavy bronze bar from the fireplace and attacked the window. The blows echoed from the roof—smash ! smash !—and the chattering of falling glass came from the garden-walk outside ; th

lead-work which had held the glass fragments together bulged out, and had to be broken out by incessant blows, which brought down shower after shower of glass fragments from that part of the window which lay above the line of my attack ; and lo ! when I had once entered on the business, all remorse fled, and a fury for destruction rose in my heart that I had never felt before, nor had I even suspected my own capacity for the feeling. So, perhaps, Philippe de Saluce felt when he destroyed his lover in a sudden accession of fury. I do not know ; but I know that from behind some veil in my mind a new man stepped out, as Monsieur Hyde stepped from the soul of Monsieur Jekyll, and that I smashed and smashed for the pure pleasure, and from the vicious lust of destruction.

Condemned to the act by Fate, I revenged myself after the fashion of a tiger. Then, tearing a brocaded curtain down from its attachments, I spread it over the glass-splintered edge of the sill, crawled over it, lowered myself, dropped, and was free.

As I stood on the garden-path, looking up at the ruin I had accomplished, I heard footsteps. The workmen were returning.

"Ah, mon Dieu, monsieur !" cried the chief ouvrier, " we had forgotten you. Not till five minutes ago did Jacques remember that monsieur had not left the house when we bolted the door and came away ; so we returned, running all the way from Etiolles."

So my destruction of the window had been in

vain, it would seem ! Not so ; for, just as at a first debauch the demon of drunkenness enters a man's heart, so at this orgie of destruction did the demon of destruction enter mine.

"Joubert," said I that night, as I went to bed, "you have everything ready for to-morrow ?"

"All is ready," replied Joubert.

"You will call me at half-past five."

"Yes, monsieur. And your promise ?"

"My promise ?"

"To tell me with whom you are going to fight."

"Ah, yes ! Well, I have two affairs on to-morrow morning. I am going to scratch Baron Carl von Lichtenberg on the arm, and I am going to drive my sword through M. de Coigny's heart !"

"Von Lichtenberg !" cried Joubert. "You are going to fight with a Lichtenberg, one of that accursed lot !"

"I am going to fight with M. de Coigny. We have been enemies for years ; he has mixed himself in this affair ; he has offered himself up as a sacrifice——"

"Mon Dieu !" cried the old fellow, drawing back, "is it you that are speaking, or the devil ?"

I was sitting up in bed ; and in a mirror across the room I saw the wan reflection of my own face, and started at the expression of wrath and black hatred portrayed there.

I had hated De Coigny for years, but not till

now did I know my own capacity for hate. Thus we go through life for years not knowing, till some day some hand draws the curtain back, holds up the mirror, reveals the other man, the Monsieur Hyde who has hidden himself at birth in the heart of Monsieur Jekyll.



## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE DUEL

"HALF-PAST five!"

Joubert was standing by the window, my bath-towels over his arm. He had drawn up the blind, and the light of early morning filled the room. I could have cursed Joubert, for he had awakened me from a most lovely dream.

In the full blaze of sunlight I had been walking in the gardens of Lichtenberg with Eloise; we were children again, and little Carl was marching before us, beating his drum. Past the fountains, past the Running Man carved in stone, we went, then into the shade of the forest, led by little Carl towards some great but indefinable happiness.

"Where are they?" I murmured, half unconscious that I was speaking, and rubbing my eyes at if to bring back the happy vision.

"Who?" asked Joubert.

I did not answer him. Who, indeed? Those children for ever vanished.

I dressed rapidly, and breakfasted. I felt both nervous and excited, exactly as I had felt on the night of the production of "Undine."

Then I sat down to write a line to Franzius

and Eloise. I had divided my property, in case of my death, leaving half to my guardian and half to Eloise. (The will was with our lawyer, and I said so in a postscript to my note. When I had finished, Joubert appeared.

"The carriage is at the door."

I sealed the letter, and handed it to him.

"In case of accidents," said I, "post this."

Joubert saluted, and put it in his pocket without glancing at the superscription.

Joubert was grave. He had never saluted me before, except in a spirit of half mockery—the way one would salute a child. I had been a child in his eyes until now, but now I was evidently a man, his master; and nothing seemed, up to this, to have divided me so sharply from my childhood and my past as this suddenly begotten change in Joubert's manner: and as I stepped from the hall-door on to the pavement, I felt that I was stepping for the first time into the world of manhood—that all had been play with me till now, and that now, this morning, the grim business of life had begun.

Joubert got on the box beside the coachman, and we started.

The early sun was bright on the trees and houses of the Champs Elysées; the trees of the Bois de Boulogne were waving in the early morning breeze; all was bright and all was fair; and it seemed a pity—a thousand pities—to have to die a morning like this, to shut one's eyes for ever, and never more see the sun.

As we drew near our destination, I felt exactly

as I often had felt in childhood when at the door of the dentist's—a strong desire to return home, coupled with a strong repugnance to face what had to be done.

The Avenue des Veuves has vanished. It was a lovely place, tree-sheltered and leading by a pond where the green rushes whispered beneath silvery willows, making a picture after the heart of Puvis de Chavannes. It opened out of a broad drive, and it was a favourite spot for the settlement of affairs of honour.

"We are first," cried Joubert, turning his head.

I stood up. Yes; there was no other carriage; in fact, we were ten minutes before our time—a great mistake, for a ten minutes' wait in an affair of this description is one of the most unsettling things possible for the nerves of a man. We drew up near the entrance to the Avenue des Veuves, and, getting out, I paced up and down, for the early morning was chilly, though it gave promise of a glorious day.

Ah! here they came—at least, some of them. A carriage rapidly driven was coming along the drive. There were three gentlemen in it, my seconds, De Brissac and M. de Champfleury, and a tall personage who turned out to be Colonel Savernac, the extra friend whom I had asked De Brissac to bring.

We had scarcely exchanged greetings when another carriage arrived, containing De Coigny and Baron Struve—who were the seconds of the Baron Carl von Lichtenberg—and Dr. Pons, the surgeon.

The seconds of either party bowed one to the other.

De Brissac took out his watch.

"What time do you make it, M. de Coigny?"

"Five minutes to the hour," replied De Coigny.

"Ah! I make it the hour. My watch is set by the Observatory clock. Still, perhaps it may have gone wrong. Make it, then, five minutes to the hour. And hi, there! Move on those carriages. We are as noticeable as the front of the Opera House; and should a mounted gendarme come this way there will be trouble."

"Monsieur," said Joubert, jumping down as the carriages moved off, "you promised."

"Yes," said I, half to Joubert, half to De Brissac, "I promised. You may remain as a spectator—at a distance."

"A servant?" said De Coigny.

"No, Monsieur de Coigny," I replied; "a faithful friend, and a soldier of Napoleon."

De Coigny turned on his heel, and began talking to Dr. Pons, who stood with a mahogany case under his arm.

"Notice," I said to De Brissac. "De Coigny has turned his back upon me; but within an hour's time, if I do not fall by the sword of Von Lichtenberg, I will require him to turn his face to me."

"You are going to——"

"Kill him," I replied.

De Brissac shrugged his shoulders, and looked again at his watch.

"I make it five minutes past the hour, M. de Coigny."

De Coigny looked at his watch and nodded.

"By the way," I heard Champfleury say to one of my adversary's seconds, "has any one seen anything of M. le Baron Carl von Lichtenberg during the last three months?"

"I have not," replied the gentleman addressed, "nor have I met any one who has. The Prussian Embassy people do not know anything of his whereabouts: he has had leave of absence."

"Rest assured," said De Coigny, "he will arrive. He is not a coward."

"All the same, he is late," said De Brissac.

I looked at my watch. It was now ten minutes past seven, an inexcusable delay on Von Lichtenberg's part, unless, indeed, some accident had occurred.

Five more minutes slowly passed; the sun had now completely freed himself from the mists of the Bois; the light struck down the path; it struck the mahogany instrument-case under the arm of Dr. Pons, and the hilts of the rapiers which De Brissac was carrying concealed in the folds of a long fawn-coloured overcoat.

"At twenty minutes past," said De Brissac, "I shall declare the duel postponed. I shall take my principal home, and I shall demand an explanation, M. de Coigny."

Scarcely had he spoken than Dr. Pons, who had been looking along the drive in the direction of the Champs Elysées, cried, "Here he comes!"

A closed carriage, drawn by two magnificent Orloff horses, had entered the broad drive and was advancing at full speed. I do not know how the weird impression came to me, but the closed carriage drawn by the black Russian horses suggested to me a funeral carriage; and before it, as it came, the sunlight seemed to wither from the drive.

A few paces from us the coachman literally brought the horses on their haunches, the door of the carriage opened, and a lady stepped out—a girl of about eighteen, an apparition so exquisite, so full of grace, so bright, so unexpected, that the men around me, used to beauty, world-worn and cynical as they were, said no word, and remained motionless as statues, whilst I clung to the arm of De Brissac.

For the girl was Margaret von Lichtenberg—Margaret von Lichtenberg, little Carl, Baron Carl, all these apotheosised! And, as I looked, a voice—Eloise's childish voice, heard long years ago—again murmured in my ear: "Little Carl is a girl."

Then I knew that it was the apparition that had followed me through life—now as a ghost, now as a child, now as a man—suddenly revealed without disguise. More lovely than Love, more tragic than Death.

"You ask me, have I come on behalf of Baron Carl von Lichtenberg? There is no longer a Baron Carl von Lichtenberg. He is dead." She was addressing De Coigny.

"Listen," whispered De Brissac, clutching my

arm. "This is very strange! I would swear it was the Baron Carl himself speaking. And she is like him. It must, then, be his sister."

"On his behalf," she went on, "I apologise to M. Patrick Mahon; and I am commissioned by him, M. de Coigny, in return for all the lies and evil words you have spoken about M. Mahon, to give you this." And she struck De Coigny on the face lightly with her gloved hand.

Then I woke up, and I felt the blood surge to my face as I stepped forward. She turned to me, with her lips half parted in a glad smile; our eyes met. God! in that moment how my whole being leapt alive! Rending its husk, my imprisoned spirit broke free, as a dragon-fly breaks free touched by the sun's magic wand. I heard myself speak; I was speaking coldly and distinctly, addressing De Coigny, and yet all my soul was addressing her in delirious unspoken words.

"M. de Coigny," said the voice which came from my lips, "we are, I believe, old enemies. I have forgotten all that, but the Baron Carl von Lichtenberg's quarrels are now mine; and if your craven heart will allow you to hold a sword, I beg to take his place."

What then followed is like a dream in my mind. I heard the seconds consulting. I heard Dr. Pons's voice speaking in a tone of relief: "So, then, we are to have some music after all!" I held two warm hands in mine, and I heard myself saying: "Yes, yes, you will stay here. I shall not be long. Oh, no; I shall not be killed! I will

return. To be killed would be too absurd *now*. Wait for me."

Then, leaning on De Brissac's arm, I was walking down the Avenue des Veuves, and now, sword in hand, I was fronting De Coigny.

He was backgrounded by the willows, all silvering to the breeze, and his hateful face filled me with a fury that rose in my throat and which I had to gulp down. He was the only thing that stood between me and the heaven that had just been revealed to me; he was there with a sword in his hand, as if to bar me out and cut me off for ever from it. He was everything I hated, and the power of hate had suddenly risen gigantic in my breast, shouting for his blood.

Then we fought. Sometimes I saw his face, and sometimes I saw it not, yet ever I knew that I held him with my eye as a fowler holds a bird in his hand.

Had any one been wandering by the Avenue des Veuves, he might have fancied that he heard the cry of a seagull—a single, melancholy cry; for it is crying thus that a man's soul escapes when he is stricken through the heart.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII

MARGARET

"HE is dead!" said Dr. Pons.

I looked at the rapier in my hand. There were a few contracting spots on it.

Then De Brissac held my coat for me.

"His foot slipped, or you would not have got him like that," I heard him say. "Oh, it is unpleasant enough, but the thing is perfectly in order. You need have no fear. Yes, yes; I will lead you to her. You will be at the Place Vendôme, I suppose? There will be an inquiry, and all that."

And then I found myself holding again the two warm hands. I was not thinking of De Coigny. I was in a dream. I stepped into a carriage that was before me. I heard De Brissac close the door, and say to the coachman: "Paris." Then I felt a girl's arm round my neck.

"Toto," said a voice, "do you remember the white rabbit with the green eyes?"

The killing of De Coigny had blinded me, maddened me, and drawn from some distant past into the full birth all sorts of strange and hitherto unknown attributes of myself.

It was as though Philippe de Saluce, slowly struggling into new birth during the last forty-eight hours, had, with the slaying of my adversary, suddenly become full born. It was necessary for me to kill, it seems, before he could find speech and thought, and stand fully reincarnated.

"Oh, far beyond that—far beyond that!" I murmured, not knowing fully what I said or what I meant, knowing only that mysterious doors had been flung open, and that through them a spirit had rushed, filling me and embracing through me the woman at my side.

"I know," she said; and for a moment spoke no more.

In those two words she told all. It was as though she had said: "I know all."

"Let us forget," I murmured, as if in answer to these words which, though unspoken by her lips, were heard by my spirit.

"I have forgotten," she replied. "I never remembered—or only in part. Let us talk of that time——"

"When we were children?"

"Yes. Do you remember——"

"Do I remember! Where is Gretel?"

"She is dead. I must tell you all; but we are nearing Paris. Cannot we go anywhere—some place where we can talk and be alone?"

"Yes." I remembered that Franzius and Eloise were away, and that we could go to the pavilion. I drew the check-string, and told the driver to take the road to Etioilles.

As I drew back into the carriage her hand

slipped over my shoulder, and her arm round my neck again.

"You know," she said, "that time when you left, I nearly forgot you. I would have forgotten you entirely but for Gretel, who always kept making me remember, telling me to beware of you, till you became my nightmare. After the death of my father, Gretel took entire charge of me. I did not know that I was a girl: I never thought of the thing. I was dressed as a boy, I had tutors, the jägers took me hunting. Yes; you were my nightmare. I used to dream that you were running after me through woods to kill me. All that was at night; but once—one afternoon—I fell asleep, and you nearly did kill me. It was only a dream, you know."

"Tell me about it."

"I was walking through a wood, and you were following to kill me, and I hid behind some bushes. But you saw me, and came after me, and I heard you falling into a pit. I looked into the pit, and you were lying there. Then I awoke."

"Go on—go on! Tell me about yourself. Don't say any more about that."

"Ah, yes, myself! Well, I grew up. Gretel died three years ago; and when she was dying she told me I was a girl. She told me all, and gave me the choice of going through life as what I am now, or as a man."

"And you?"

"Chose to be a man." She laughed deliciously, and under her breath.

"These things"—and she plucked at her dress—"feel strange on me even now. Oh, yes, I chose to be a man. Who would not, if the choice were given them? And no one knew. The Baron Carl von Lichtenberg was quite a great person. He was admired by all the ladies. He was so ornamental that he was sent as attaché to the Embassy at Paris. Yes; and he went to the ball at the Marquis d'Harmonville's——"

"Ah, that night!" I muttered. "It was the beginning——"

"Of your tribulations," she laughed softly, and went on: "When I saw you I was nearly as startled as you were yourself. I had all my life determined that I would avoid you; but that night—ah! that night——"

"Well?"

"I don't know. I could not sleep. I cursed my man's clothes; and I would have given all I possessed to speak to you dressed as I am now. Then I sought you, and you avoided me. You insulted me, monsieur, at your club."

"Ah! why—why did you not declare yourself then?" I muttered, speaking into the warmth of her delicious neck. "Think what we have lost—a whole year nearly of life and love!"

"Why, indeed! Just, I suppose, because I was a woman, filled with a woman's caprice; and the masquerade amused me, and I had my duties to perform—and how you evaded me! I was invited to meet you at dinner——"

"And I dined at the Café de Paris with a fool."

"Just so. And you ran away to Nice. Then

the idea came to me—ah, yes, it was a fine idea!—I will *make* him meet me. And I slapped you on the shoulder with a glove."

"Yes; when I was seated in the box at the Opera with a lady."

"Yes. Who was the lady? I was too excited to see any one but you."

"She was——" Then I paused. And then I said—why, I can never tell—"she was a friend of my guardian."

"Next morning I received your challenge. How I laughed to myself!"

"But tell me one thing. Why did you stipulate for a delay of three months before the duel?"

She laughed again.

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes."

"Because I wanted time—to—to——"

"Yes?"

"To let my hair grow. Do you like it?" She drew a long pin from her hat, removed her hat, and showed her perfect head and the coils of night-black hair.

. . . . .  
"We must never part again."

"We need never," said she. "I am yours. I am not existent in the world. The Baron Carl von Lichtenberg is dead: he died when I put on these things. There is no one to trouble us!"

"Look!" I said. "This is Etiolles,"  
. . . . .

I had as completely forgotten Franzius and Eloise as though they had never existed. Madame Ancelot seemed strange; and the pavilion a place which I recognised, but which had no part in my new life.

Sitting opposite to my companion at table—for we had déjeuner under the big chestnut-tree—I could contemplate her at my leisure. Surely God had never created a more lovely and perfect woman. Eyelashes long and black, up-curved, and tipped with brown; violet-grey eyes. Ah, yes; I do not care to think of them now. I only care to remember that voice and smile, that ineffable expression, all that told of the existence of the beautiful spirit that Time might never touch nor Death destroy.

From the forest came the wood-doves' song to the immortal and ever-weeping Susie. We could hear the birds in the château gardens, and a bell from some village church ringing the Angelus—faint, far away, robbed of its harshness by the vast and sunlit silence. She seemed the soul of all that music, all that silence, all that sweetness; and she was mine, entirely and for ever. We were beyond convention and law, as were Adam and Eve.

"And you know," said she, as if reading my thoughts, "I am nobody—I have not even a name. Yesterday I was Baron Carl von Lichtenberg, with great estates. Now, who am I? And my great estates——" She opened a purse, in which lay a few louis. "Here they are."

I laughed, and put the little purse into my pocket.

"Tell me," I said; "where were you when you were coming out of your chrysalis? when you were changing—all these three months?"

"I—I was at Tours. The Baron von Lichtenberg received three months' foreign leave, and went to Tours. Oh, the complications! And the dressmakers! I did not even know at first how to wear these things. Do they fit me?"

"Do they fit you!"

I rose, and we crossed the drawbridge. As she passed over it, she paused and gazed at the water.

"How cool it looks! How dark and deep! Do you remember the pool at Lichtenberg?"

"And how I pushed you in. Do you remember the little drum?"

"And the child with the golden hair—Eloise. She called you Toto. I have always called you Toto since, M. Patrick Mahon."

"Call me it still," I said. "I love anything that reminds me of my past—of our past. Come, let us go into the woods, as we went that day."

She laughed at the recollection of the little Pomeranian grenadier.

"We were children then," said she.

I looked at her. In the shadow of the trees, in the broad drive where we stood, she might have been a ghost from that time when La Vallière was a girl, when La Fontaine was a man, and Monsieur Fouquet held his court at Vaux.

Though of the fashion of the day, her dress had that grace which the wearer alone can give; and, as I looked at her, the forest sighed deeply

from its cool, green heart, the boughs tossed, showering lights upon us, and the laughter of the birds followed the wind.

"We were children then," said I, "but we are not children now." I took both her hands, and held her soul to mine for a moment in a kiss that has not ended yet.

. . . . .

Where the beech-glades give place to the tall pines—the fragrant pines, whose song sounds for ever like the sea on a distant strand—we sat down on a bank, which in spring would be mist-blue with violets.

"I have never kissed any one before. Have you?" she asked.

"No one," I replied, forgetting Eloise.

"Never loved any one?" She rested her hands on my shoulders, and looked into my eyes.

"Never."

"For," said she, "if you had——"

"Yes?"

"I don't know. Sometimes I do not know my own thoughts. Sometimes I act and do things that seem strange to me afterwards. I made you meet me this morning out of caprice. I teased you, following you as I did to Nice, dressed as I was, from caprice. That is not me. There is something wicked and wayward in me that I cannot understand. Had it not been for me you would not have killed that man this morning."

I had not thought of De Coigny till now; and the remembrance of him lying there dead in the



arms of Dr. Pons came like a gloomy stain across my mind. But it soon passed.

"We would have fought in any case," said I, "inevitably."

She sighed, as if relieved.

"He was a bad man," she said. "He deserved to die for the things he said about you to me. It was partly on that account that I arranged all that this morning, so that I might insult him before those men; but I never thought it would end as it did."

"Do you know," said I, "when I killed him it was as if the blood which I shed had baptized me into a new life! My full love for you only awoke then. It was as if some spirit out of the past that had loved you for ages had suddenly been born completely."

"Don't!" she said. "I hate to think of that. Let the past be gone for ever. You are yourself, alive and warm. You are my sun, my life, the air I breathe. You have been kept for me untouched. Oh, how I love you!"

"Listen!" she said, freeing her lips from mine, and casting her beautiful eyes upwards. "No; it is not the wind. Ah! listen! listen!"

From the trees came a sound that was not the voice of the birds. Far away it seemed now, and now near. It was the spinning-song of Oberthal, that tune, thin as a thread of flax, rising, falling, poignant as Fate, and filled with the story of man—his swaddling-clothes, his marriage-bed, and his shroud.

There, amidst the trees, coming from nowhere,

diffused by the echoes of the wood—for a wood is a living echo—heard just then, the song of Oberthal seemed the voice of Fate herself.

I knew quite well what had happened. Franzius had returned. Madame Ancelot had told him that I was in the wood. Wishing, no doubt, to find me he had sent the tune to look for me—the old tune that he knew I liked so well.

“It is a friend of mine, I think,” said I—“a violinist. He stays at the pavilion. And now I want to tell you something.”

“Yes?”

“I told you I had never cared for another woman.”

“Yes.”

“Listen! The tune has ceased. Well, there has been only one woman in my life till I met you. You remember little Eloise at Lichtenberg, she who called me Toto?”

“Yes.” She had placed her hand to her heart, as though she felt a pain there.

“Well, I met her again in Paris. She had grown up. She was very poor, and I gave her the pavilion to live in. She is living there now.”

“Now!”

“Yes,” said I, laughing. “And, see, there she is. Wait for me.”

Franzius and Eloise had just appeared from the wood away down the drive. It was fortunate that Franzius was with her, for now I could bring them both up and introduce them. Their love for one another was so evident that it would be an explanation in itself.

I ran towards them.

Eloise was radiant; Franzius as brown as a berry.

"Eloise!" I cried, as I kissed her and wrung both her hands, "do you remember little Carl? Do you remember saying to me: 'Toto, little Carl is a girl?' She is here: she is waiting to meet you. Come."

"Where?" asked Eloise.

I turned, laughing, to point out the figure of my companion. The drive was empty. The songs of the birds, the shadows of the trees, the golden swathes of light, were there; but of Margaret von Lichtenberg there was no trace!

"She has hidden herself amidst the trees," I cried. "Come."

But there was no trace of her amidst the trees.

"Margaret!"

I was frightened at my own voice, at its ghostliness, and the echo of the sweet name that came back from the wood. A wreath of morning mist could not have vanished more completely.

What madness of the Lichtenbergs, what Imp of the Perverse, what touch of the Angel-demon we call Fate had turned my kiss given in friendship to Eloise into a weapon piercing my soul, my heart, my happiness?

I am sure that just then the Franziuses must have thought me mad.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### THE DRUMS OF WAR

OH, caprice of a woman ! To leave me like that, in a moment of anger and jealousy, never to wait an explanation ; to let fall what might be the curtain of eternal separation with a touch of her hand ; to step away from me and vanish into that vast, vague, cruel land we call the world !

And I had held her so close to me ! She was so entirely mine, the happiest dream that ever mortal dreamt, the most mysterious and beautiful.

She had taken the carriage which we left at the inn at Etioilles, and returned to Paris. That we discovered ; but beyond that there was no word or sign to lead me.

I only knew that she was in Paris. Even of that I was not quite sure, for she may have used Paris only as a stage on her journey into the unknown.

But to Paris I came. I could not stay at Etioilles, even on the chance of her returning. I must go where she had gone. And I swore in my madness to find her, even though I searched Paris from the heights of Montmartre to the depths of the Seine.

And then, when I got to Paris, I found my hands idle and useless. I did not know, even, what name she had gone under during her metamorphosis—she who had no name, this ghost from the past!

At times I found myself wondering whether it was all a dream, an illusion of the brain—whether I was mad. But actuality brought me to reason on this point. I had to answer the inquiries following the death of De Coigny; I had to appear before an examining magistrate—I and my seconds.

Felix Rebouton was the magistrate in question, the same who, if my memory serves me, conducted the inquiry on the death of Victor Noir. He was a thin, tall man, in spectacles, a lawyer, not a man; a *procès-verbal* in a tightly buttoned frockcoat.

And I had to face this individual, who seemed less an individual than a roll of parchment, and, with my heart breaking and my thoughts elsewhere, answer questions relative to my relations with De Coigny.

"We have always hated each other, since boyhood. He lied about me, and I killed him," was my answer.

"This lady who arrived on the scene of the duel, and with whom you departed—where is she?"

"Ah, if you could tell me that," I replied, "I would give you every penny of my fortune."

"Her name?"

"She has no name."

"No name!"

"She is a ghost."

The man of parchment scratched his head and made a note, looked sideways through his spectacles at his clerk and at De Brissac and the other seconds who were in the room.

He thought I was mad. And he was not far wrong.

The inquiry was suspended for three weeks, and I was free to return to my misery and the streets of Paris.

I lived now in the streets. They were my only hope. From early morning till night I haunted the boulevards. Franzius had orders to telegraph to my club and to the Place Vendôme should any news reach the pavilion, and the club porter grew weary of the inquiry: "Any telegram for me?"

Men began to avoid me as they do the stricken, the leprous, and the mad. I must have seemed mad, indeed, for ever wandering hither and thither, searching the crowded streets with eager eyes, scarcely answering if spoken to, careless and untidy in my dress, a phantom of myself. Like Poe's man of the crowd, I drifted about Paris, ever in the thick of the throng, seeking the most populous streets.

Impossible to tell in what quarter of the city caprice might have cast her, I sought her in all—Montmartre and La Villette, the Quartier Latin and the great boulevards. I dreaded only one thing, night—night, when my search must cease; night and the pitiless gas-lamps, the terrible gas-

lamps. Then it was that light, the angel that all day had helped my search, became a devil, contracting itself into a million heartless points to show me the darkness. Then it was that the stars burning in the clear sky above the city became part of my sorrow.

All things bright and all things fair were leagued against me, in that they fed the flame of my suffering; and the happiness and gaiety of others became the last insult of the world.

Then it was that Joubert showed himself in his true light. Not one word did he ever say to me, though my conduct, my manners, my disordered dress, must have given him food for the deepest speculation and disquiet. He would put out my clothes and attend to my wants, speak to me about ordinary topics, never heed my silence or my harsh replies. You see, he was an old soldier; he had seen men stricken so often that he knew the language and the signs of real grief and real suffering.

I lost count of the days, and from opium alone could I get any sleep. Absorbed in my grief, I took no heed of the events around me. I remember distinctly in cafés and at my club hearing men talking of the Hohenzollerns and the succession to the Spanish throne—men talking vehemently about a subject which was to me as uninteresting and as unintelligible as algebra to a child. But I could feel the ferment and unrest around me.

On the fifteenth of July, at ten o'clock in the morning, I was passing across the Place de la

Concorde, when a roar like the sound of a great and distant sea broke on the summer air. It came from the direction of the Rue St. Honoré. People were running across the Place de la Concorde, and pouring from the Rue de Rivoli and from the bridges. The Champs Elysées behind me had become alive with people; cabmen were standing up on the driving-seats of their carriages, waving their hats and shouting; windows of houses were alive and white with fluttering handkerchiefs; and now, again and again, came the storm of sound, unlike anything I had ever heard before, unlike anything I will ever hear again; wave after wave, storm after storm, and through it all the drums of a marching regiment.

The Ninety-first Regiment of the Line were marching down the Rue St. Honoré, bayonets fixed, haversacks filled, drums beating, and colours fluttering. Paris was marching with them. And then through the storm came the cry uttered by a thousand throats: "À Berlin! A Berlin!"

"What is it?" I asked of a passer-by.

"War has been declared with Prussia!"

"With Prussia?"

"Bismarck——" I did not hear what else he had to say, deafened and dazed by the roar that now surrounded me.

"À Berlin! A Berlin!"

War had been declared with Prussia. Oh, fatality!

Bismarck! At the name the gardens of Lichtenberg unrolled before me. I saw them stretching



to the edges of the pine-forests. I heard the rattle of little Carl's drum as he marched before us, the sound that had echoed through the years, to be amplified and converted into this.

War! Red war! And then, curiously, as I stood gazing and listening to the storm that was gathering to wreck the last of my hopes, I saw something which I had forgotten for years, and which now came before me as a vivid picture: a great hand with a seal-ring on the little finger, holding and half caressing the tiny hand of a child—the hand of Bismarck holding the hand of Eloise, as I saw it that day long ago in the hall of Schloss Lichtenberg; the iron hand which was to crush the armies of France and fling Napoleon from his throne.

I elbowed my way through the crush towards the Place Vendôme. My own affairs were dwarfed, for the moment, by the magnitude of the event and the furnace roar of the rejoicing city. Jubilant and ferocious, lustful and blood-thirsty, triumphant as the blare of a trumpet, terrible as the voice of a tiger, the gusts of sound swept the heavens. It was the voice of the Second Empire, not the voice of a people; it was cruelty, lust, and organised vice crying aloud to God for blood.

God heard it, and made swift answer.

I arrived at the Place Vendôme to find a surprise awaiting me.

Franzius and Eloise were there. They had brought luggage with them, which was in the hall. The servant who opened the door for me

told me they were in the library, and I ran there to meet them.

"Toto," cried Eloise; then, holding me at a little distance and staring at me as though I were a ghost: "What has happened to you?"

I caught a reflection of myself in the mirror above the fireplace, and for the first time I recognised the change in myself. Haggard, white, and drawn, my face was no longer the face of a young man.

"Never mind me," I replied. "Why have you left Etiolles? Have you any news?"

"My friend," said Franzius, answering for her, "there is no news—only news of war."

"Ah, yes," I said. "War. But tell me why you have left Etiolles?"

"I am a Prussian," replied Franzius; "and we are returning."

"Returning?"

"To my own country."

"You are leaving me?"

There was silence for a moment, and Eloise began to weep.

"Toto, can't you see?"

"Ah, yes," I said; "I can see—everything is going from me. Don't cry, Eloise; I can see. Franzius, forgive me. I forgot. I did not know what war meant till now."

Up to this I had seen war through the stories told in books. I had seen war on the canvases in the Luxembourg and the Louvre. But up till now, standing there in the library before

Franzius, with his overcoat on his arm, and Eloise weeping, I had not seen war.

Oh, yes; it is very grand: the long lines of infantry going into action, the clouds of cavalry, the roar of the cannon, and the drums beating the charge!

But that is not war. War is voiceless.

Yesterday we were at peace. To-day we are at war. Something has entered into every heart and into every home; a million tiny fingers are busy snapping a million bonds of union. Blow trumpets and beat drums how you please, you cannot chase away the silence which has entered into the hearts of men, or the foreboding that tells us the great curse has come again.

"It is not even that we must go," said Franzius, "but that we must go at once. We are not going; we are driven forth. My friend, we will meet again, when it is over."

"When it is over," I said mechanically.

They had received their passports, and they told me of their plans. Franzius was beyond the age of military service. They would go to Frankfort, where he had some relations. He had plenty of money with which to live quietly till "it was over" and the world could hear music again.

I ordered a carriage to the door, and accompanied them to the station, through streets packed and crowded as if by some fête.

The station was thronged, and the train for the frontier was on the point of starting when we arrived. I have never seen such a crowd before.

Families and their belongings, small tradesmen, Germans who had been prospering yesterday and who to-day, ruined and hopeless, were being driven forth back to their own country to starve. The buffet had been stripped of food; and when I thought of the long journey before my friends and the chances of the road, my heart misgave me, till Eloise showed me a basket that had been packed for them by Madame Ancelot.

Just as the train was starting, I jostled against a vendor of oranges who still had a few unsold. I bought them and gave them to Eloise.

I could not help remembering the day we had gone down first to Etioilles, she and I, and the oranges I had bought for her in the Boulevard St. Michel—that day, in spring!

“Good-bye! Good-bye!”

Eloise had squeezed herself through the window beside Franzius; the train moved away; the people who were leaving said a last good-bye to the people they had left, to friends who had cared for them till war came as a separation, to brother Germans who were bound to depart by the next train. I never heard so mournful a sound as that when the great train drew away for its journey into Forever, leaving me alone on the platform.

I came back on foot. It was a long way; and as I passed the crowded cafés, the crowds of excited and fever-stricken people, it seemed to me that I was in a city whose inhabitants had at one stroke gone mad.

I found myself, for the first time in many days,

able to note the things around me, and to take some interest in them. The great upheaval had shaken me in part away from my own especial pre-occupation; the grief of the parting with Eloise and Franzius had obscured in part that other grief which pursued me.

The great city had been stirred to its uttermost depths, as the great sea is sometimes stirred by a submarine explosion. Dregs came to the surface and floated as scum; and I saw people that day in the streets that I had never seen before: terrible people, cast up from the purlieus and the slums, dog-men and beast-women, such as insulted the light of heaven during the Terror; faces that might have served Retzsch for his picture of the fiend, or Calot for his fantastic devil-drawings. Collette la Charonne, Mathurine Giroron, Elizabeth Trouvain, the capon and the franc-mitou from the past, elbowed the bully of the barrier and the fishwife from the Halles of the present.

At the word "War" Mathias Hungadi Spiculi rose from his long sleep, just as he had risen at the word "Revolution." All the elements of the Commune were there that day, shouting France to war, and ready to dance on her ruins.

Even the bourgeoisie, the placid people, the café loungers, were changed. The tiger-cat which lies at the heart of the Latin races, the animal that spits, and snarls, and howls, was unchained at last; and the joyful ferocity of the women was a thing to see and to remember. It was the uprising of the pampered beast, the beast that

had sunned itself for years in prosperity. Long ages of insult might have condoned what I saw that day, but the circumstances never.

Bands of women, arm in arm, students waving the tricolours, cabs and carriages crowded with people driving nowhere, anywhere, so that they could find a new place to shout in, girls with men's hats on their heads, men with women's bonnets—it was Mabille, into which the beasts of the Jardin des Plantes had broken; La Closerie des Lilas on an infinite scale, roofed with sky.

And, beyond the Vosges, at his desk, quite unmoved, with a cigar in his mouth and a folio in his hand, was sitting Bismarck, secure in everything, possessed of everything, from the Erbswurst for the Prussian cooking-pots to the guns that were to batter down Paris.

I have said little about my social life in Paris, but I have indicated, I think, that my guardian and I were friends of the Emperor; and I mention it as a strange fact, and a fact that casts volumes of light on his character, that now, in my desolation, deserted by my guardian, deserted by Franzius and Eloise, deserted by every one I loved, the image of Napoleon rose before me as a person I would like to speak to. You know just what I mean. There is generally amongst one's friends some person, some homely individual, some good man or good woman, to whom we go when in affliction for a word of consolation, or even just to feel their presence. We look in and see them, even though we may say nothing of our troubles. Moved by this

instinct, I resolved to look in and see the Emperor. To get near the Tuileries was a difficult business, and, worse, to pass the Cent Gardes at the gate, but, once inside, things were easier.

The Emperor had come to Paris from the Council at Saint Cloud, held the night before. I do not know whether the Empress accompanied him or not, but he was in the palace, and the great hall was thronged.

The excitement of the streets was here, too, though in a more subdued form. Men were talking and laughing; every one felt, or seemed to feel, that some great good fortune was impending. As a matter of fact, the war seemed to promise a "move up" all round—honour to France, showers of gold and decorations from those painted skies which Hope rears so pleasantly above fools, and, above all, change.

Most of these men were money-changers at heart; corrupt, vicious, ready to devour, true children of the Second Empire, descendants of the clique of rogues which manipulated the Coup d'Etat, sent Hugo to exile, and flung France into the net spread by parasites, financiers, and corrupt politicians. France, with her foot on the neck of Germany, seemed to promise fabulous things to these. They had much, and they wanted more. They craved for change—and they got it.

Amidst the crowd, which included some of the greatest names in France, it seemed hopeless for me to seek an audience. But I knew the place.

I saw the Palace Prefect, Baron Vareigne. He had just shaken himself free from half a dozen men, and was making off down the corridor when I tacked myself on to him.

"See him? Impossible! For a moment?—just to pay your respects? Oh, well, only for a moment, then. You will be a change from the others. He just said to me: 'For Heaven's sake, let in no more generals!'"

And, with a click of a door-handle, there he was before me, seated in full uniform, which did not seem to fit him, the eternal cigarette smouldering between his lips, just the same old gentleman who had received my guardian and me so courteously that day; just the same useless, shuffling manner, the nasal voice, the half-closed eyes, crafty yet kindly—rising to meet me with a little, subdued laugh, half-cynical, as though thanking God I were not another general. He bade me be seated, and told me he was not in a hurry, but being hurried, and looked over some papers that Vareigne handed him, and said: "Yes, yes," and flicked some cigarette-ash off his trousers. He talked to me for a few minutes, asking after the Vicomte de Chatellan, and then dismissed me, pushing me out of the cabinet with a kindly hand on my shoulder, and a kindly wish to see me again—après.

This was the true Napoleon, the man kind to all, the injudicious man who made those unfortunate children half drunk at the children's party at Biarritz, the man who loved his little son so well, the man who would put a fistful of gold in a poor



man's pocket, just because it was a poor man's pocket: I say, this was the true Napoleon. For what shall you measure a man by, when all is said and done, if not by his heart? Ah! how I would have loved that man if he had been my father!

When I left the Tuileries I remembered the fact that I had not eaten since morning. I went to a café and dined after a fashion. I returned home late, and as I entered the hall the servant who took my hat said: "A lady called an hour ago to see monsieur."

"A lady to see me?"

"Yes, monsieur. I told her that you had gone to Etioilles, to the Pavilion of Saluce, and she ordered her coachman to drive there."

I remembered, now, that when I started to see Franzius and Eloise off at the station I had said to the servant that I might go to Saluce, and if I did not return I would be there.

"What was she like?"

"Madame was quite young, tall, dark, and—very beautiful."

"Good God!" I said. "*Why* did I not return an hour sooner! Quick! Send me Joubert!"

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## CHAPTER XXXIX

### NIGHT

JOUBERT found me in the dining-room.

"Joubert," I shouted, "the swiftest horses—quick!—and a carriage to take me to Etiolles! You will drive me."

Joubert glanced at me and left the room like a flash.

I walked up and down. She had been here an hour ago—here an hour ago—and I had been walking the streets unconscious of the fact! The war which had threatened to destroy my last hope had brought her, perhaps, to my door, and I had been dining at a café! I had come slowly home through the streets, and she was here waiting for me! Was she leaving France? Was Etiolles but a stage on the journey? And if she found that I was not there what would she do? Would she return, or—go on?

I sprang to the bell and rang it violently.

"The horses! The horses!" I cried. "God in heaven! are they never coming?"

"The horses are at the door, monsieur."

I rushed out, seized my hat, which the man handed me; he opened the door, and there stood

a closed carriage; two powerful greys were harnessed to it, and Joubert was on the box.

"Joubert," I said, "drive as you never have driven before. My life is in your hands!"

Then we started.

And now, as if called up by nightmare, the crowd in the streets, which I had forgotten, impeded our progress. The Rue St. Honoré was like a fair. As, sitting in the carriage, that was compelled to go at a walking pace, I looked out of the window at the senseless illuminations, the brutal or foolish faces, I could have welcomed at once a German army that would have swept a clear path for me.

We passed the gates of Paris without hindrance, and then down a long street lined with houses. It was after ten o'clock now, but these houses, in which dwelt poor folk, were ablaze from basement to garret.

The good news of the war had spread itself here; the great national rejoicing had found an echo even in this street, where men slept sound as a rule, as men sleep who have passed the day labouring in a factory.

The horses had now settled into a swinging trot. Half a dozen times I lowered the window to urge Joubert, but I refrained. There were still twenty miles before us. If one of our horses broke down, it was highly improbable that we could get another.

The houses broke up, and became replaced by trees; market-gardens lay on either side of the way. Looking back, I could see Paris—not the

city, but the furnace-glare that its gas-lit streets and cafés cast on the sky. We passed forts, huge black shadows marked in the darkness by the glitter of a sentry's bayonet or the swinging lantern of a patrol. We passed down the long street of Charenton, and then the wheels of the carriage rumbled on the bridge that crosses the river, and we were in the true country, with great spaces of gloom marking the fields, and marked here and there with the dim, patient light of a farmhouse window or the firefly dance of a shepherd's lantern.

Up till now I had watched intently the passing objects—the houses, stray people, and lights; but now there was nothing to watch but dim shapes and vague shadows. Up to this I had controlled thought, forcing myself to wait without thinking for the event; but now, alone in the midst of night, with nothing to tell of the surrounding world but the rumble of the carriage-wheels and the beat of the horse-hoofs on the road, thought assumed dominance, and would not be driven away. Nay, it returned with a suggestion that froze my heart.

“If she has gone to the pavilion, she will leave her carriage in the avenue and go there on foot—she will cross the drawbridge. Ah, yes; the drawbridge! Well, suppose that the drawbridge is up! God in heaven! will she see it?”

It froze my heart.

What time would Madame Ancelot retire, and would she raise the drawbridge?

I knew very well that the drawbridge was

always raised last thing at night: the tramp-infested forest made this necessary. And I knew very well that Madame Ancelot was in the habit of retiring at nine o'clock. Still, to-night was a night in a thousand. Old Fauchard had, without doubt, dropped into the pavilion to talk about the great news of the war.

I put my head out of the window.

"Quicker, Joubert!"

"Oui, oui," came his voice, followed by the sound of the whip. The night air struck me in the face like a cold hand; and, looking back, I could still see the light of Paris reflected from the sky, paler now and more contracted in the vast and gloomy circle of night.

It was cloudy over Paris, but the clouds were breaking, and the piercing light of a star, here and there, shone through the rents. The moon was rising, too, and her light touched the clouds.

Ah! this must be Villeneuve St. Georges, this long street to which the trees and hedgerows had given place.

I knew the road to Etioilles well, but to-night it all seemed changed.

We passed cottages and by-roads, and now at last we were nearing Etioilles. I could tell it by the big houses on either side of the road, houses with walled-in gardens and grass lawns, where young ladies played croquet in the long summer afternoons, so that a person on the road could hear the click of the balls and the laughter of the players. The moon had fully risen now, casting

her light on the houses, the walls, the vineyards, rolling towards the river ; the trees, and shrubs.

The great gates of the Château de Saluce were open, and at them, in the roadway, stood a carriage and a pair of coal-black horses.

I knew that carriage again ; and as we drew up I heard Joubert shout to the driver asking him how long he had been waiting.

"An hour," replied the man. "Madame told me to wait."

"Wait for me also, Joubert," I said, getting out. Then I went up the carriage-drive, and took the path leading to the pavilion.

My heart was lighter, for the way was almost as broadly lit by the moonlight as though it were early morning.

"Everything is distinct," I said to myself, "and she can have come to no harm."

But I had forgotten, only to remember the fact suddenly and dreadfully, that an hour ago the moon had not risen ; an hour ago the pavilion had not been lit like this, but plunged in the deepest darkness.

Yes ; the drawbridge was up, and the pavilion, bathed in the profound peace of the moonlight, showed no glimmer from window or door.

An owl in the forest hooted, and I could hear the reply a long way off amidst the trees. The night had become absolutely windless ; absolute silence reigned under the moon, the great moon of summer, rising towards the zenith and casting its reflection on the waters of the moat.

Then I knew in some occult way that there

was nobody in the pavilion, that Madame Ancelot had shut the place up, raised the drawbridge by the secret lever that enabled it to be raised from the forest side of the moat, and taken the key to her father's cottage, that there was nobody alive in the place or near the place—not even in the moat.

Then I dragged myself to the water's edge, and, lying on the ground with my chin over the water, looked in. A sound filled my head like that sound I had heard years ago when a child in the Schloss Lichtenberg—the gasping sound of a person drowning in the dark.

An imaginary sound, for the tragedy had happened an hour ago.

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## PART IV





## CHAPTER XL

### LOOKING BACK

LOOKING back across the years I see a man maddened by a great grief. He is myself, yet he seems a stranger, so completely has time faded the darkness of the picture.

Even then, stunned and in the midst of grief, I was conscious of a duplicity of soul, the man awakened in me by the death of De Coigny, the man baulked of love and passion, the *man whom Lichtenberg had feared*, this man was master of my emotions but not of my will. Like a furious maniac in the first hours of my grief he kept crying to me to kill myself. "Of what use is life to you," said he, "now that love and hope are gone from you for ever?" Then, like a prisoner who cannot break his prison or corrupt his gaoler, he sank to apathy, to die in me at last, as a prisoner punished and placed in a dungeon dies of his imprisonment.

The mysticism that leads nowhere has no part in the story of my life; but looking back on that story would I not be blind could I not see clearly that in us our ancestors may live

again, act again, and receive the punishment evaded in a past life?

The drunkard, long dead and buried, steps boldly forth again into the light of common day; not as a ghost, but as a descendant; as the lover who murdered his mistress did in me.

We were at war.

Useless as I was for fighting, shunning the faces of my friends, I remained at the pavilion, with Joubert and Madame Ancelet for servants.

We were at war, yet nothing spoke of war. The blue sky of autumn arched itself across a world of peace. The woods knew nothing of the matter. The fields cared nothing for the matter, and the river flowed to the sea, shivering to the wind, and shaded by the willow as it had flowed when Pepin was king.

The grief that obsessed me, so far from dimming my perception of external things, made it more acute. Never for a moment did I imagine that France would be other than victorious, and now under the autumn sun, silent in the face of the foe, she seemed to me beautiful, triumphant, calm; indifferent to all earthly things with the indifference of an immortal.

To me, a cripple condemned to look on, a being dispossessed of joy, this serenity and triumphant calm, the thought of those armies marching to conquest, those drums beating, those colours flying, those sunlit legions moving towards immortal deeds—all—all were terrible as the recollection of summer skies to the blind.

News came of great success. "In a month," said Joubert, "we shall be in Berlin." But next day came other news. We were not so successful, it seemed. The blackest thing in my life is the joy I felt that day, less joy, perhaps, than satisfaction that all was not going so supremely well, that others were shadowed by some tinge of the cloud which was mine.

Weissenburg, Woerth, names of ill-omen, were but the heralds of names more ominous still, and as the wind shook the autumn leaves from the trees in the woods a shadow fell on the autumn fields and a silence on the hills.

And now, like leaves before the wind, the people of the villages and hamlets and farms, the charcoal burners, whose huts were in the forest, all these, before the wind of disaster, passed away, driven towards Paris, leaving behind them farms where no men worked, empty byres, cottages in whose gardens the last autumn flowers withered in the sun, villages empty as in time of pestilence, and a silence such as no man could conceive who had not experienced it.

The street of Etiolles was silent in the broad light of noon as though it lay beneath the moon of a midwinter night, doors clapped to the wind, and the signboard of the inn creaked on its hinges, and the sparrows bickered in the dust of the road, but sound of human life there was none.

I would send Joubert to Paris for news, and he would return always with bad news—disaster upon disaster, till at last came the crowning

word, "The Prussian armies are marching upon Paris!"

"As for me," said Joubert, "I do not believe it. The Prussians marching on Paris—old wives' tales."

"Maybe," replied I, "but there is sometimes truth in them."

"We will see," replied Joubert—and we did.

## CHAPTER XLI

### THE VISION OF THE ARMY

It was three days later, a Thursday if I remember right, rain had fallen the night before, but the sky was now clear. We had been in the château, Joubert and I, looking after the stores we had placed in one of the cellars: meal, potatoes, what not, bought from the country people before they left; enough, with the game in the woods, to keep us through the winter should the worst come to the worst. It was high noon, warm for the time of year, and with the faintest breathing of wind from the west. I had just closed the main door, and we were standing on the steps; Joubert, with a sack over his shoulder, had descended the steps, and was waiting on the drive for me.

From the steps one had a good view of the country, the Paris road, the willows betraying the river, glimpses of the country beyond. I had cast my eyes over the scene, and I was just on the point of joining Joubert when, away to the left, above some stunted trees, I saw a bright flutter as if a flock of birds were in flight following the road to Paris.

"Joubert!" I cried. "Here, quick!"

He dropped the sack, and next moment he was beside me.

"Look!" said I, pointing. "There, beyond those trees!"

"Lancers!" replied Joubert, with his hand shading his eyes. "Those are the pennons. French? *No*. Listen!"

A quarrelling sound, the sound of trotting squadrons, a sound which will haunt me for ever, came against the wind that was paling the poplar trees of the avenue. And still the bright, bird-like pennons flew like an endlessly streaming flock, breaking now to view closer between the trees, bugle calls, and now, louder, and in full swing, passing the gates, hazing the air with dust went the Uhlans, swift as a dream sweeping the roads in advance of the army.

And now, almost instant on their passing, came the metallic, cantankerous sound of drums, harsh yet faint, from where one could not at first tell, then more definite, sharp, and hard, and underscored by the tramp of the marching regiments.

I swear before God that sound was the most soul-stirring and terrifying ever heard by me awake or in dreams, and the sight that followed as the bayonet-crested head of the army broke into view the most august conceivable by man. Eight deep, headed by the drums of two regiments, along the broad French highroad it came, steadfast as on parade, a column hard and strong, buttressed by flying detachments of Uhlans,

spraying out horsemen across country ; I could see the lancers' pennons twinkling by the river, horsemen were riding across the park, the fields were overrun with the enemy as well as the roads ; but nothing could draw my eyes from the core of the tragedy, the great, dark army of invasion on the road, the great, steel-crested snake, passing the gates, yet visible miles away through the trees as though it were advancing from the country of Legion, the land of an armed and infinite people. Heading the regiments rode the commanders, their busts seeming to float upon the shoals of bayonets, the neigh of a horse, the call of a bugle, a hoarsely shouted order broke now and again through the haze of dust, to be drowned out instantly by the cacophony of the drums and the tramp, tramp, tramp of the bayonet-crested battalions.

That was War as I saw it from the steps of the Château de Saluce that autumn day. The rest is history, the winter-long roaring of the guns round Paris, the misery, the death, and the stupefaction of defeat.

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## CHAPTER XLII

### THE SPIRIT OF EARTH

ALL that winter, from the passing of the investing army to the time when the siege guns began to shake earth and sky with their ceaseless roar, and from then to the spring, when the guns of the communards took up the tale, we remained at the pavilion, Joubert and I, unhindered, almost unvisited by the enemy. The château drew them off. We had left the doors open to prevent them from being broken in; perhaps it was for this reason that so little mischief was done by the troops that quartered themselves there.

The coincidence of winter and war, the leafless trees, the eternal roaring of Paris like a tiger at bay, the darkness and death in my heart, all these are in my life away back there, forming a picture or rather a dark mirror reflecting the forms of despair, apathy, and ruin, just as the dark water of the moat reflects the fern fronds of the bank and the dark green plumage of those pine trees.

Nothing could ever come right in the world again. The gloomy skies, shaken by the cannon said that, and the woods, leafless and sad and

sombre, where the squirrels and the hundred other wood creatures seemed banished for ever with the birds. So the winter passed, till one day—I had not been in the woods for a week—one day, following a path near the round pond, I came across a troop of ghosts—violets growing right before me on the path side; and to the left, amidst the trees, gem-like, blue, and dim amidst the brown, last autumn leaves—violets. Led by a few days' warmth a million violets had invaded the old forest, grouped themselves amidst the trees and along the paths, heedless of death or the Prussians.

Even as I looked a breath of wind bent the tree-branches like a warm hand, showing through the naked branches a patch of blue sky above, and casting a ray of sunshine on the blue flowers below. The Drums of War, the trampling of armies, proclamations, treaties, the pageantry of victory, the sorrows of defeat, all in a moment were banished before that touch of spring and the vision of these lovely and immortal flowers.

Since then I have seen them growing amidst the ruins of Mycenae, in Vallombrosa, at the tomb of Virgil; poets, lovers, warriors, and kings, wherever sun may light or spring may touch their tombs, call to us again through the blue violets of spring; but never have these flowers of God brought the past to man so freshly, so strangely, or with such poignancy as they brought it to me there, growing absolutely in the footsteps of ruin, yet unruined, and with not a dewdrop brushed from their leaves.

Ah, yes, there are times when the commonest man becomes a poet, as on that day, when dreaming of the death of a woman and the dragon of war, I found Spring hiding in the forest of Sénart, just like some enchanting ghost of long ago—half child, half woman—and answering to my unspoken question, "War, death, I have not seen them—I do not know whom you mean; they passed, mayhap, when I was asleep. Monsieur, do you not admire my violets?"

The sublime and heavenly cynicism of that artless question, the question itself, these combined to form the germs of a philosophy which has clung to me since then—a philosophy which, combined with love, has slain in me the remains of what was once Philippe de Saluce.

Then day by day and week by week the forest, the fields, the hills, became slowly overspread with the quiet, assured, and triumphant beauty of spring, just as long ago I fancied that I could hear the forest awakening from sleep, so now I fancied I could hear the world awakening from war and night. Communards might fight in Paris, kings and captains assemble at Versailles, Alsace might go or Alsace might remain—what was all that toy and trumpery business to the great business of life, to the preparation of the blossom, the building of the butterflies in the aerial shipyards, the letting slip of the dragon-fly on his dazzling voyage? What a hubbub they were making in the courts of Europe as Von der Tann's army, the King of Saxony's army, all those other triumphant armies

turned from Paris with bugles blowing, drums beating, and colours flying, laden with tumbrils of gold and the spoils of war!

"France will never arise again!" said the drums and the bugles.

"Never again," echoed Europe. "Ah, wait——" said Spring.

Behind the veils of sunshine and April rain, heedless of Von der Tann's drums or the Saxon bugles or the vanquished men or the vanished treasure, viewless and unvanquished the spirit of earth was preparing the future for a new and more beautiful France. Each bee passing from blossom to blossom that spring was labouring for the greater France of the future, each acorn forming in its cup, each wheat grain sprouting in the dark, each grape globing in the vineyards of the Côte d'Or, each and all were labouring for the motherland, to fill again her granaries and her treasure-house. Folly had brought her under the knee of force; drained of blood, half dying, wholly vanquished, in tears, in madness, in despair, she lay forsaken by all the Olympians but Demeter.

Had I but known, those first violets in the forest of Sénart held in their beauty all the future splendour and beauty of the new France.

In my life I have seen many a wonderful thing, but my memory carries with it nothing more miraculous than those flowers of promise seen as I saw them in the forest of despair.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### THE RETURN OF THE VICOMTE

ALL the winter I had received not a word of Franzius or Eloise, not a word from my guardian lodging safely and comfortably in London with his money safely invested in English securities. With the end of the commune came a letter from the Vicomte. He was returning. It was a long and, for him, a bitter letter; the doings of the Communards capped, in his eyes, the whole criminal folly of which France had been guilty, yet his rare commonsense told him that this was the end of the fireworks, the "bouquet" without which no French pyrotechnics have been complete since the days of Ruggieri.

But he was not returning to Paris; "a ball-room the morning after a fête is not an enlivening place." He was coming to the pavilion. Stoutly as the words held themselves together in his letter, the handwriting betrayed the writer.

The Vicomte de Chatellan was sadly shaken. The grand old shuffler had up to this managed to evade all those things that are, in truth, the servants of age—work of an unpleasant nature,

worry, defeat, strong emotions, all these servitors who help their master to make men old the Vicomte had left behind him, by a master stroke, in Paris. He went to London, and behold there he met age itself.

He had walked the boulevards for so many years, he had carried his wit and his fine personality into so many cafés, he had become an integral part of so much brilliancy that to be brilliant with him was to live. He could not shine in Long's Hotel in a London fog, or in Belgrave Square on a bleak December day; the weather and the exteriors of the houses chilled for him the welcome and the warmth of their interiors. He became dismal, which for an old man of his temperament is a disease, and with his lost gaiety at a stroke he became an "old fogey."

Of course he might have gone to Naples or Palermo, but London held him on account of its contiguity to the seat of war; and I doubt if even palm trees and southern sunlight could have lightened his melancholia.

He was a very old man. As he listened in London to the falling away of the France he loved, piece by piece, he knew that he was listening to the destruction of his world, and that the Vicomte de Chatellan would have no part on the boulevards of the Paris to come except that of an old man walking of a morning to get the sun. "The Vicomte de Chatellan, ah, yes, he is a relic of the Second Empire."

A piece of old china, a bibelot, an old ballad

interesting because of association, so would he be in the salons of the new age.

Oh, no, said he to himself, before that I will allow myself to die. He suffered from the same disease as the Emperor, a fact which the grand old aristocrat looked upon with half-veiled eyes and spoke about never—as though it had been a blur on his scutcheon.

In London he saw, I believe, Sir Henry Thompson, received a gloomy prognosis which did not depress him in the least, and returned to Long's Hotel to make his will.

I shall never forget our meeting. At great expense and no little inconvenience he had travelled from Boulogne in a travelling carriage bought in Long Acre for the journey, and shipped across the Channel on the boat in which he travelled. He did not wish to touch Paris, and at four o'clock of a cloudless day he arrived, he and Beril and a pile of luggage. We had got the pavilion in order, Joubert and I, fires were lit in all the rooms despite the brightness of the weather; the pleasant little house never looked more pleasant, and you would never have guessed that the great war had passed it but a few months ago.

"But," said I, when I had embraced my guardian, and helped him to descend from his carriage, "what has happened—what ails you?"

"London," replied the Vicomte de Chatellan, taking my arm and ordering Beril to look after his jewel case and other important effects with a wave of his cane. "I have returned from the

siege of London—*mordieu*, gently. I cannot walk so fast—Admiral Fog and General Dulness, my dear Patrique, hold that city always in siege.”

I was shocked by the change in him, so bent, so feeble, so old was he; and then I was pleased and charmed, for, despite all the ruin caused to him during the siege of London, the Vicomte was still the Vicomte. Age had attacked him suddenly like an assassin. “Bend to me you will,” had cried age, and the Vicomte had bent his back, not without a certain grace, but he had not bent in spirit, nor in mind. Serene, courtly, superficial, yet in some curious way profound, the mind of the Vicomte looked forth from its ruined tenement with perfect equanimity on the world below it.

The sight of the pavilion, so little touched by change, so hung with memories of irresponsible gaiety and pleasant days, pleased him. The light laughter of women still lingered there for him.

“Coquette,” cried he, striking the door-post with his cane, as I led him in, “you have flirted with the Prussians or you would not be so trim and well-dressed—I forgive you, for it seems to me you are not ill-pleased to see the old man back.”

The sunlight and the voices of the birds, all the laughter of the summer afternoon filled the little sitting-room where he sat taking a glass of Chambertin after his journey, whilst Beril prepared his bed.

Butterfly by day, moth by night, he had passed through life always in the light: the sunlight or the gaslight of the Second Empire.



And here he had come to rest, storm-blown from the ruined city; here where women were not, only flowers, where glory was not, except the glory of summer or spring, and where the lights of Tortonis and the gas-gemmed boulevards had dwindled to the lamps of the glow-worms in the wood.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### THE REVELATION

ONE day, some three weeks after the arrival of my guardian, Beril informed me that M. le Vicomte wished for an interview.

M. le Vicomte had for the last week kept entirely to his bed. "Tired with my journey" was the phrase he used to account for this symptom of indisposition. He refused doctor or nurse. Beril attended to him. Beril was old, older than Joubert, he was crabbed, discontented as a rule, with everything and every one, and always ready to fight; but he was devoted, heart and soul, to his master.

No food ever entered the Vicomte's room except in the hands of Beril. He acted as secretary and servant. He read to him. One day I came up unexpectedly and found him seated, a pair of horn spectacles on his forehead, and a volume in his hand. It was a volume of Paul de Kock. The window was open and summer, in all her arrogance and pride was looking in, with, it seemed to me, not an unkindly gaze.

Two children playing at being philosophers over some musty and philosophic tome would

have made a less charmingly humorous picture than these two; one reading to the other through a pair of spectacles—the adventures of Madame Pantaloons.

“And so the Vicomte wishes to see me, Beril?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

I went up.

It was towards four o'clock in the afternoon. The Vicomte, shaved, alert, and bright was sitting up in bed. Never since his return had he looked so much his old self. I congratulated him on his appearance, and he bade me be seated.

“I have a surprise for you,” said he; then he hung silent for a moment.

“A surprise?”

“You will remember,” said the Vicomte, “a political reception of mine at which monsieur arrived unexpectedly——”

“In morning clothes,” I cut in. “Will I ever forget it?”

“And a conversation we had about a young lady in my library immediately after it.”

“About Eloise.”

“Yes. I would speak of her. She will be here to-day, or, if not, to-morrow.”

“Eloise here!” I cried; “but I do not even know where she is. I have not heard from her since the beginning of the war. Has she written, then, to you and not to me? And Franzius, is he coming too?”

“Monsieur Franzius is dead,” said the Vicomte

I rose from my chair. Franzius, dear, kind Franzius dead! The good friend—the genius whom I had helped to the light—dead!

“But,” stammered I, “this is horrible. Dead! when did he die—where did he die? Why was I not informed before, since you know it?”

“He died only a week after his return to Germany,” replied the Vicomte, “that is to say, a week after the declaration of war. He died of a chill caught on the journey; he was one of the victims of M. Bismarck. The little Eloise wrote to me and I received the news in London.”

“Wrote to you and not to me—and you have been corresponding with her, you ask her here, and I am told nothing of all this till to-day. Why has his death been hidden from me? What mystery is in this, or is it simply——”

The Vicomte silenced me with one glance of his eye.

“Simply what, monsieur?”

“Callousness.”

The Vicomte lowered his eyes to his hands, which were lying spread on the coverlet. He gazed for fully half a minute at his nails without speaking or giving any sign that he had heard my answer, then he said:

“You remember my opposition to your marriage with Mademoiselle Feliciani?”

“I do.”

“You remember admitting to me that you did not love this girl, and my words of advice to you on the subject?”

“I do.”

"You remember the day Monsieur Franzius called at our house in the Place Vendôme, bringing us the news that Mademoiselle Feliciani had accepted his love?"

"Ah, poor Franzius, can I ever forget that day!"

"Well, monsieur, I had something to do with his happiness—indirectly."

"You!"

"Yes, I. Some days before I had called upon Mademoiselle Feliciani; unknown to you I had taken my horses and driven down here to the pavilion. I had seen the inevitable ending of your entanglement with her; I had determined coldly, even brutally—if you will—to put the case before her in its worldly aspect, to point out the social ruin that would inevitably fall on you from such a match, and the moral ruin also, inasmuch as you did not love her——"

The Vicomte paused; then he went on.

"I fancied," said he, "that I was dealing with an ordinary and perhaps designing girl, a girl who cared for you as little as you cared for her. I was mistaken. She loved you!"

Had he drawn a pistol from beneath the coverlet and levelled it at my head, the action could not have astonished me more than those three words.

Quite unable to grapple at once with the true sense of the revelation, I stood grasping the rail of the bed whilst he went on.

"She told me quite simply. She had for you, monsieur, that absolute devotion which we rarely

find in this world. Had you cared for her, and had your positions been more equal, I should have been glad. As it was, I left her with sorrow in my heart. She had promised me nothing. My instinct for women forbade me to ask her for any pledge; I just left the position before her, and the fact that should she marry you she would ruin you. A few days later her answer came, not in the form of a letter, but in the form of M. Franzius, whom she had accepted as her husband."

"But she loved him," I cried.

"Oh, monsieur," replied the Vicomte, "there are so many things in the warm corner of a woman's heart that go under the name of love. Passion, affection, pity, liking—I do not know Mademoiselle Eloise's feelings for the man she married. I only know this—she made him a good wife; but I do know her passion for the man she did not marry—and now," finished he, "you will perhaps understand why, on the death of her husband, she did not approach you. She wrote to you informing you of her husband's death, but you did not reply; her letter must have miscarried."

"And you have asked her here to see me——"

"Monsieur, I did not ask her here to see you; I asked her here because I am going to die, not soon, but very soon, and I wish to take my leave of the earth in the form of the only good woman it has been my lot on this earth to meet. Should—and mind you, now that France has fallen to pieces, all those old strands and ties of the social

state are broken which once held you apart—should you see in her, by the light of what I have told you, the woman that I see, then, monsieur, if you cannot love her, honour her for the sake of the old man who first read her heart.”

O, strange character! He, alone of all men, with the exception of the poet Franzius, had read that heart. He, the boulevardier, the roué, the cynic, had taken the true measure of all that sweetness, constancy, chastity, and love. I had been blind. I had fancied she cared for me that summer, but I did not know the reality of her love; I could not see the greatness of that pure and immortal soul, blinded as I was by the stupidity of youth.

“Should you see in her, by the light of what I have told you, the woman that I see, then, monsieur, if you cannot love her, honour her for the sake of the old man who first read her heart.”

Ah, Vicomte, many years have passed, and I have loved her the more for each passing year—and many a flower has she cast on your grave for the sake of the old man who first read her heart.

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## CHAPTER XLV

### ENVOI

Now look you back, and tell me who brought Eloise into my life away back there in the gardens of the Schloss Lichtenberg? Who but Margaret, or the power that drew me towards her? And who cast Margaret from my life into the moat of the pavilion of Saluce? Who but Eloise, or the power that drew her towards me.

Looking at my life as I choose to look at it, I see that the life of a man begins not at the hour of his birth, and ends, who knows when—but not at the hour of his death.

The people of the past live in us just as we shall live in the people of the future, unless, freed from passion, earth, and the dross of matter, we rise to higher spheres on the wings of love.

Looking at the picture of my life I see that it is but a little sunlit piece of some obscure and tremendous tapestry. Franzius, the wandering minstrel, Margaret, mysterious as death, the good Vicomte, Eloise, who brought me light and love; all these form a picture the full meaning of which I shall not gather until the sun of the



eternal land lights the entire tapestry to its darkest corners.

Only this I know, that as Margaret von Lichtenberg held my past in her keeping, so held Eloise Feliciani my future. One brought me punishment and death, one brought me pardon and life; and how many men are there not in the world who, reading this story of mine, can say—"Ah, that is my story, too"?

I am writing these lines in the rose-garden of Saluce, ghostly, even on this warm June day, with the memories and the pictures and the perfumes of the past. How good summer is to the old! And how much kinder even than summer is love?

Down the garden path towards me is coming the form of a woman. Once, long ago, with the romantic extravagance of youth, I pictured this garden, haunted by the forms of lovely women long dead; but not one of those forms was as romantic as this living woman, coming towards me between the bushes of the amber and crimson roses.

How slowly she walks, and, see, she stops now and hesitates. Ah, now she has seen me, and she smiles. Age has not touched her sight, yet she is blind—for she is the only person in the world who cannot see that my hands are tremulous and that my hair is grey.





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